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The
Selected Works of

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

GITANJALI
CHITRA

SELECTED POEMS

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English Edition

English Edition
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1

Gitanjali

1

Gitanjali

The Nobel Prize

Acceptance Speech

I AM glad that I have been able to come at last to your country and that I may use this opportunity for expressing my gratitude to you for the honour you have done to me by acknowledging my work and rewarding me by giving me the Nobel Prize.

I remember the afternoon when I received the cablegram from my publisher in England that the prize had been awarded to me. I was staying then at the school Shantiniketan, about which I suppose you know. At that moment we were taking a party over to a forest near by the school, and when I was passing by the telegram office and the post office, a man came running to us and held up the telegraphic message. I had also an English visitor with me in the same carriage. I did not think that the message was of any importance, and I just put it into my pocket, thinking that I would read it, when I reached my destination. But my visitor supposed he knew the contents, and he urged me to read it, saying that it contained an important message. And I opened and read the message, which I could hardly believe. I first thought that possibly the telegraphic language was not quite correct and that I might misread tile meaning of it, but at last I felt certain about it. And you can well understand how rejoicing it was for my boys at the school and for the teachers. What touched one more deeply than anything else was that These boys who loved me and for whom I had the deepest love felt proud of the honour that had been awarded to him for whom they had feeling of reverence, and I realized that my countrymen would share with me the honour which had been awarded to myself.

The rest of the afternoon passed away in this manner, and when the night came I sat upon the terrace alone, and I asked myself the question.what the reason could be of my poems being accepted and honoured by the West - in spite of my belonging to a different race, parted and separated by seas and mountains from the children of the West And I can assure you that it was not with a feeling of exaltation but with a searching of the heart that I questioned myself, and I felt humble at that moment.

I remember how my life's work developed from the time when I was very young. When I was about 25 years I used to live in utmost seclusion in the solitude of an obscure Bengal village by the river Ganges in a boat- house. The wild ducks which came during the time of autumn from the Himalayan lakes were my only living companions, and in that solitude I seem to have drunk in the open space like wine overflowing with sunshine, and the murmur of the river used to speak to me and tell me the secrets of nature. And I passed my days in the solitude dreaming and giving shape to my dream in poems and studies and sending out my thoughts to the Calcutta public through the magazines and other papers. You can well understand that it was a life quite different from the life of the West. I do not know if any of your Western poets or writers do pass the greatest part of their young days in such absolute seclusion. I am almost certain that it cannot be possible and that seclusion itself has no place in the Western world.

And my life went on like this. I was an obscure individual - to most of my countrymen in those days. I mean that my name was hardly known outside my own province, but I was quite content with that obscurity, which protected me from the curiosity of the crowds.

And then came a time when my heart felt a longing to come out of that solitude and to do some work for my human fellow-beings, and not merely give shapes to my dreams and meditate deeply on the problems of life, but try to give expression to my ideas through some definite work, some definitive service for my fellow-beings.

And the one thing, the one work which came to my mind was to teach children. It was not because I was specially fitted for this work of teaching, for I have not had myself the full benefit of a regular education. For some time I hesitated to take upon myself this task, but I felt that as I had a deep love for nature I had naturally love for children also. My object in starting this institution was to give the children of men full freedom of joy, of life and of communion with nature. I myself had suffered when I was young through the impediments which were inflicted upon most boys while they attended school and I have had to go through the machine of education which crushes the joy and freedom of life for which children have such insatiable thirst. And my object was to give freedom and joy to children of men.

And so I had a few boys around me, and I taught them, and I tried to make them happy. I was their playmate. I was their companion. I shared their life, and I felt that I was the biggest child of the party. And we all grew up together in this atmosphere of freedom. The vigour and the joy of the children, their chats and songs filled the air with a spirit of delight, which I drank every day I was there. And in the evening during the sun-set hour I often used to sit alone watching the trees of the shadowing avenue, and in the silence of the afternoon I could hear distinctly the voices of the children coming up in the air, and it seemed to me that these shouts and songs and glad voices were like those trees, which come out from the heart of the earth like fountains of life

towards the bosom of the infinite sky. And it symbolized, it brought before my mind the whole cry of human life all expressions of joy and aspirations of men rising from the heart of Humanity up to this sky. 1 could see that, and I knew that we also, the grown-up children, send up our cries of aspiration to the Infinite. I felt it in my heart of Hearts.

In this atmosphere and in this environment I used to write my poems Gitanjali, and I sang them to myself in the midnight under the glorious stars of the Indian sky. And in the early morning and in the afternoon glow of sun-set I used to write these songs till a day came when I felt impelled to come out once again and meet the heart of the large world.

I could see that my coming out from the seclusion of my life among these joyful children and doing my service to my fellow creatures was only a prelude to my pilgrimage to a larger world. And I felt a great desire to come out and come into touch with the Humanity of the West, for I was conscious that the present age belongs to the Western man with his superabundance of energy.

He has got the power of the whole world, and his life is overflowing all boundaries and is sending out its message to the great future. And 1 felt that I must before I die come to the West and meet the man of the secret shrine where the Divine presence has his dwelling, his temple. And I thought that the Divine man with all his powers and aspirations of life is dwelling in the West.

And so I came out. After my Gitanjali poems had been written in Bengali I translated those poems into English, without having .any desire to have them published, being diffident of my mastery of that language, but I had - the manuscript with me when I came out to the West. And you know that the British public, when these poems were put before them, and those who had the opportunity of reading them, in manuscript before, approved of them. I was accepted, and the heart of the West opened without delay.

And it was a miracle to me who had lived for fifty years far away from activity, far away from the West, that I should be almost in a moment accepted by the West as one of its own poets. It was surprising to me, but I felt that possibly this had its deeper significance and that those years which I had spent in seclusion, separated from the life and the spirit of the West, had brought with them a deeper feeling of rest, serenity and feeling of the. eternal, and that these were exactly the sentiments that were needed by the Western people with their overactive life, who still in their heart of hearts have a thirst for the peace, for the infinite peace. My fitness was that training which my muse had from my young days in the absolute solitude of the beaches of the Ganges. The peace of these years had been stored in my nature so that I could bring it out and hold it up to the man of the West, and what I offered to him was accepted gratefully.

I know that l must not accept that praise as my individual share. It is the East in me which gave to the West. For is not the East the mother of spiritual Humanity and does not the West, do not the children of the West amidst their games and plays when they get hurt, when they get famished and hungry, turn their face to that serene mother, the East" Do they not expect their food to come from her, and their rest for the night when they are tired? And are they to be disappointed.

Fortunately for me I came in that very moment when the West had turned her face again to the East and was seeking for some nourishment. Because I represented the East I got my reward from my Eastern friends.

And I can assure you that the prize which you have awarded to me was not wasted upon myself. I as an individual had no right to accept it, and therefore 1 have made use of it for others. I have dedicated it to our Eastern children and students. But then it is like a seed which is put into the earth and comes up again to those who have sown it, and for their benefit it is producing fruits. I have used this money which I got from you for establishing and maintaining the university which I started lately, and it seemed to me, that this university should be a place where Western students might come and meet their Eastern brethren and when they might work together in the pursuit of truth and try to find the treasures that have lain hidden in the East for centuries and work out the spiritual resources of tile East, which are necessary for all Humanity.

I can remind you of a day when India had her great university in the glorious days of her civilization. When a light is lighted it can not be held within a short range. It is for the whole world. And India had her civilization with all its splendours and wisdom and wealth. It could not use it for its own children only. It had to open its gates in hospitality to all races of men. Chinese and Japanese and Persians and all different races of men, came, and they had their opportunity of gaining what was best in India, her best offering of all times and to all Humanity. And she offered it generously. You know the traditions of our country are never to accept any material fees from the students in return to the teaching, because we consider in India that he who has the kn owledge has the

responsibility to impart it to the students. It is not merely for the students to come and ask it from the master, but it is the master who must fulfil his mission of life by offering the best gift which he has to all who may need it And thus it was that need of self-expression, of giving what had been stored in India and offering the best thing that she has in herself that made it possible and was the cause and the origin of these universities that were started in the different provinces of India.

And I feel that what we suffer from in the present day is no other calamity but this calamity of obscurity, of seclusion, that we have missed our opportunity of offering hospitality to Humanity and asking the world to share the best things we have got. We lost our confidence in our own civilization for over a century, when we came into contact with the Western races with their material superiority over the Eastern Humanity and Eastern culture, and in the educational establishments no provision was made for our own culture. And for Over a

century our students have been brought up in utter ignorance of the worth of their own civilization of the past. Thus we did not only lose touch of the great which lay hidden in our own inheritance, but also the great honour of being able to contribute to the civilization of Humanity, to have opportunity of giving what we have and not merely begging from others, not merely borrowing culture and living like eternal schoolboys.

But the time has come when we must not waste such our opportunities. We must try to do our best to bring out what we have, and not go from century to century, front land to land and display our poverty before others. We know what we have to be proud of, what we have inherited from our ancestors, and such opportunity of giving should not be lost –not only for the sake of our people, but for the sake of Humanity.

That is the reason, and that led me to the determination to establish an international institution where the Western and Eastern students could meet and share the common feast of spiritual food.

And thus I am proud to say that your awarding me the prize has made some contribution to this great object which I had in my mind. This has made me come out once again to the West, and I have come to ask you, to invite you to the feast which is waiting for you in the far East. I hope that my invitation will not be rejected. I have visited different countries of Europe, and I have accepted from them an enthusiastic welcome. That welcome has its own meaning, that the West has need of the East, as the East has need of the West, and so the time has come when they should meet.

I am glad that I belong to this great time, this great age, and I am glad that I have done some work to give expression to this great age, when the East and the West are coming together. They are proceeding towards each other. They are coming to meet each other. They have got their invitation to meet each other and join hands in building up a new civilization and the great culture of the future.

I feel certain that through my writing some such idea has reached you, even if obscurely through the translation, some idea which belongs both to the East and the West, some idea which proceeding from the East has been able to come to the West and claim its rest here, its dwelling, and to be able to receive its welcome, and has been accepted by the West. And if in my writings I have been fortunate enough to be able to interpret the voice of the need of the time I am deeply thankful to you for giving me this glorious opportunity. The acknowledgment I got from Sweden has brought me and my work before the Western public, though I can assure you that it has also given me some trouble. It has broken through the seclusion which I have been accustomed to. It has brought me out before the great public to which I have never been accustomed. And the adjustment has not been yet made. I shrink in my heart when I stand before the great concourse of Humanity in the West. I have not yet been accustomed to accept the great gift of your praise and your admiration in the manner in which you have given it to me. And I feel ashamed and shy when standing before you - I do so now. But I will only say that I am thankful to God that he has given me this great opportunity, that I have been an instrument to bring together, to unite the hearts of the East and the West. And I must to the end of my life carry on that mission. I must do all that I can. The feeling of resentment between the East and the West must be pacified: I must do something, and with that one object I have stared this institution.

I do not think that it is the spirit of India to reject anything, reject any race, reject any culture. The spirit of India has always proclaimed the ideal of unity. This ideal of unity never rejects anything, any race, or any culture. It comprehends all, and it has been the highest aim of our spiritual exertion to be able to penetrate all things with one soul, to comprehend all things as they are, and not to keep out anything in the whole universe - to comprehend all things with sympathy and love. This is the spirit of India. Now, when in the present time of political unrest the children of the same great India cry for rejection of the West I feel hurt. I feel that it is a lesson which they have received from the west. Such is not our mission. India is there to unite all human races. Because of that reason in India we have not been given the unity of races. Our problem is the race problem which is the problem of all Humanity. We have Dravidians, we have Mohammedans we have Hindoos and all different sects and communities of men in India. Therefore, no superficial bond of political unity can appeal to us, can satisfy us, can ever be real to us. We must go deeper down. We must discover the most profound unity, the spiritual unity between the different races. We must go deeper down to the spirit of man and find out the great bond of unity, which is to be found in all human races. And for that we are well equipped. We have inherited the immortal works of our ancestors, those great writers who proclaimed the religion of unity and sympathy, in say: He who sees all beings as himself, who realizes all beings as himself, knows Truth. That has once again to be realized, not only by the children of the East but also by the children of the West. They also have to be reminded of these great immortal truths. Man is not to fight with other human races, other human individuals, but his work is to bring about reconciliation and Peace and to restore the bonds of friendship and love. We are not like fighting beasts. It is the life of self which is predominating in our life, the self which is creating the seclusion, giving rise to sufferings, to jealousy and hatred, to political and commercial competition. All these illusions will vanish, if we go down to the heart of the shrine, to the love and unity of all races.

For that great mission of India I have started this university. I ask you now, when I have this opportunity, I invite you to come to us and join hands with us and not to leave this institution merely to us, but let your own students and learned men come to us and help us to make this university to a common institution for the East and the West may they give the contributions of their lives and may we all together make it living and representative of the undivided

Humanity of the world.

For this l have come to you. l ask you this and I claim it of you in the name of the unity of men, and in the name of love, and in the name of God. I ask you to come. I invite you.

26 May 1 92 1, Stockholm

Gitanjali

I

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou halt carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only or. these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill

II

When thou commandest me to sing, it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony - and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.

III

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah, thou last: made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

IV

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

V

I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil.

To-day the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs; and the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove.

Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.

VI

Pluck this little flower and take it. Delay not! fear lest it droop and drop into the dust

It may not find a place in thy garland, but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day end before I am aware, and the time of offering go by.

Though its colour be not deep and its smell be faint, use this flower in thy service and pluck it while there is time.

VII

My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight O master poet, .l have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

VIII

The child, who is decked with prince's robes and who has jewelled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at every step.

In fear that it may be frayed, or stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move.

Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.

IX

O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders? O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door!

Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all, and never look behind in regret.

Thy desire at once puts out the light from the lamp it touches with its breath. It is unholy -take not thy gifts through its unclean hands. Accept only what is offered by sacred love.

X

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

Pride call never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

XI

Leave this chanting and singing, and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! what harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

XII

The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said, "Here art thou!"

The question and the cry, "Oh,where?" melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance, "I am!"

XIII

The song that l came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.

I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.

XIV

My desires ate many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals; and this strong mercy has been wrought into my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked - this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind -saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.

XV

I am here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat.

In thy world I have no work to do; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master, to stand before thee to sing.

When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, commanding my presence.

XVI

I have had try invitation to this world's festival, and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.

It was my part at this feast to play upon my instrument, and 1 have done all I could.

Now, I ask, has the time cone at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation?

XVII

I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. That is why it is so late and why I have been guilty of such omissions.

They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

People blame me and call me heedless: I doubt not they are right intheir blame.

The market day is over and work is all done for the busy. Those who came to call me in vain have gone back in anger. l am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

XVIII

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all :lone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd, but on this dark lonely day it is only for thee that I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how lam to pass these long, rainy hours.

I keep gazing on the far-away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

XIX

If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure it. I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil and its head bent low with patience.

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.

Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds' nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

XX

On the day when the lotus bloomed, alas, my mind was straying, and I knew it not. My basket was empty and the flower remained unheeded.

Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and l started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind.

That vague sweetness made my heart ache with longing and it seemed to me that it was. the eager breath of the summer seeking for its completion.

I knew not then that it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart.

XXI

I must launch out my boat. The languid hours pass by on the shore- Alas for me!

The spring has done its flowering and taken leave. And now with the burden of faded futile flowers I wait and linger.

The waves have become clamorous, and upon the bank in the shady lane the yellow leaves flutter and fall.

What emptiness do you gaze uponl Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air' with the notes of the faraway song floating from the other shore?

XXII

In the deep shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers.

To-day the morning has closed its eyes, heedless of the insistent calls of the loud east wind, and a thick veil has been drawn over the ever-wakeful blue sky.

The woodlands have hushed their songs, and doors are all shut at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. Oh, my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house - do not pass by like a dream.

XIII

Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend? The sky groans like one in despair.

I have no sleep to-night. Ever and again I open my door and look out on the darkness, my friend!

I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies thy path!

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend?

XXIV

If the day is done, If birds sing no more, if the, wind has flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.

From the traveller, whose sack of provisions is empty before the voyage is ended, whose garment is torn and dust-laden, whose strength is exhausted, remove shame and poverty, and renew his life like a flower under the cover of thy kindly night.

XXV

In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.

Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation for thy worship.

It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.

XXVI

He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, 0 miserable me!

He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies.

Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep?

XXVII

Light, oh, where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!

There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame, - is such thy fate, my heart? Ah, death were better by far, for thee!

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful, and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in me, - I know not its meaning.

A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh, where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire desire! It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void The night is black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

XX VIII

Obstinate are the trammels • but my heart aches when I try to break them.

Freedom is all I want, but t to hope for it I feel ashamed.

I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the : heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.

The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate it, yet hug it in love.

My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy; yet when I come to ask for my good; I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.

XXIX

He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this is wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.

I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name; and for .all the care I take I lose sight of my true being.

XXX

I came out alone on my way to my tryst But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?

I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.

He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger; he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.

He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame; but I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.

XXXI

"Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?"

"It was my master," said the prisoner. "I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power, and 1 amassed in my own treasure-house the money due to my king. When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my lord, and on waking up I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure-house."

"Prisoner, tell me, who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?" "It was 1," said the prisoner, "who forged this chain in very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip."

XXXII

By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world. But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs, and thou keepest me free.

Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone. But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.

If I call not thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart. thy love for me still waits for my love.

XXXIII

When it was day they came into my house and said, "We shall only take the smallest room here."

They said, "We shall help you in the worship of your God and humbly accept only our own share of his grace;" and then they took their seat in a comer and they sat quiet and meek.

But in the darkness of night I find they break into my sacred shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.

XXXIV

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am

bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life - and that is the fetter of thy love.

XXXV

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

XXXVI

This is my prayer to thee, my lord - strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength tc make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

XXXVII

I thought that my voyage had come to its end at the last limit of my power, - that the path before me was closed, that provisions were exhausted and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity.

But I find that thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.

XXXVIII

That I want thee, only thee - let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry - "1 want thee, only thee".

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is - "I want thee, only thee".

XXXIX

When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.

XL

The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked - not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower.

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father's wrath.

XLI

Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadows? They push thee and pass thee by on the dusty road, taking thee for naught. I wait here weary hours spreading my offerings for thee, while passers-by come and take my flowers, one by one, and my basket is nearly empty.

The morning time is past, and the noon. In the shade of evening my eyes are drowsy with sleep. Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not

Oh, how, indeed, could I tell them that for thee I wait, and that thou hast promised to come? How could 1 utter for shame that I keep for my dowry this poverty? Ah, I hug this pride in the secret of my heart.

I sit on the grass and gaze upon the sky and dream of the sudden splendour of thy coming - all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over thy car, and they at the roadside standing agape, when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust, and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl a-tremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze.

But time glides on and still no sound of the wheels of thy chariot. Many a procession passes by with noise and shouts

and glamour of glory. Is it only thou who wouldst stand in the shadow silent and behind them all? And only I who would wait and weep and wear out my heart in vain longing?

XLII

Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage to no country and to no end.

In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words

Is the time not come yet? Are there works still to do? Lo, the evening has come down upon the shore and in the fading light the seabirds come flying to their nests.

Who knows when the chains will be off, and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset, vanish into the night?

XLIII

The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life:

And to-day when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find they have lain scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.

Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star.

XLIV

This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.

From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when 1 shall see.

In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.

XLV

Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes. Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, "He comes, comes, ever comes"

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds lie comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet chat makes my joy to shine.

XLVI

I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy sun and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye.

In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy messenger has come within my heart and called me in secret.

1 know not why to-day my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and l feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.

XLVII

The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain. I fear lest in the morning he suddenly come to my door when I have fallen asleep wearied out. Oh, friends, leave the way open to him - forbid him not.

If the sound of his steps does not wake me, do not try to rouse me, I pray. I wish not to be called from my sleep by the clamorous choir, of birds, by the riot of wind at the festival of morning light. Let me sleep undisturbed even if my lord comes of a sudden to my door.

Ah,.my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish. Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile when he stands before me like a dream emerging from darkness of sleep.

Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms. The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul, let it come from his glance. And let my return to myself be immediate return to him.

XLVIII

The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs; and the flowers were all merry by the roadside; and the wealth of gold was scattered through the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed. We sang no glad songs nor played; we went not to the village for barter; we spoke not a word nor smiled; we lingered not on the way. We quickened our pace more and more as the time sped by.

The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade. Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon. The shepherd boy drowsed and dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree, and I laid myself down by the water and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.

My companions laughed at me in scorn; they held their heads high and hurried on; they never looked back nor rested;

they vanished in the distant blue haze. They crossed many meadows and hills, and passed through strange, far-away countries. All honour to you, heroic host of the interminable path! Mockery and reproach pricked me to rise, but found no response in me. I gave myself up for lost in the depth of a glad humiliation - in the shadow of a dim delight.

The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom slowly spread over my heart. I forgot for what I had travelled, and I surrendered my mind without struggle to the maze of shadows and songs.

At last, when 1 woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile. How I had feared that the path was long and wearisome, and the struggle to reach thee was hard!

XLIX

You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.

I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear. You came down and stood at my cottage door.

Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours. But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love. One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize you came down and stopped at my cottage door.

L

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say, "What hast thou to give to me?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly cook out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap! I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

LI

The night darkened. Our day's works had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrived for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said the King was to come. We laughed and said, "No, it cannot be!"

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep. Only some said, "It is the messenger!" We laughed and said, "No, it must be the wind!"

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy murmur, "No, it must be the rumbling of clouds!"

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came, "Wake up! delay not!" We pressed our hands on our hearts and shuddered with fear. Some said, "Lo, there is the King's flag!" We stood up on our feet and cried "There is no time for delay!"

The King has come - but where are lights, where are wreaths? Where is the throne to seat him? Oh. shame! Oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations? Some one has said, "Vain is this cry! Greet him with empty hands, lead him into thy rooms all bare!"

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the King of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has came of a sudden our King of the fearful night.

LII

I thought l should ask of thee - but I dared not - the rose wreath thou hadst on thy neck. Thus I waited for the morning, when thou didst depart, to find a few fragments on the bed. And like a beggar I searched in the dawn only for a stray petal or two.

Ah me, what is it I find? What token left of thy love? It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. The young light of morning comes through the window and spreads itself upon thy bed. The morning bird twitters and asks, "Woman, what hast thou got?" No, it is no flower, nor spices, nor vase of perfumed water - it is thy dreadful sword.

I sit and muse in wonder, what gift is this of thine. I can find no place where to hide it. I am ashamed to wear it, frail as I am, and it hurts me when I press it to my bosom. Yet shall I bear in my heart this honour of the burden of pain, this gift of thine.

From now there shall be no fear left for me in this world, and thou shalt be victorious in all my strife. Thou hast left death for my companion and I shall crown him with my life. Thy sword is with me to cut asunder my bonds, and there shall be no fear left for me in the world.

From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping in corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour. Thou hast given me thy sword for adornment. No more doll's decorations for me!

LIII

Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with stars and cunningly wrought in myriad-coloured jewels. But more beautiful to me thy sword with its curve of lightning like the outspread wings of the divine bird of Vishnu, perfectly poised in the angry red light of the sunset.

It quivers like the one last response of life in ecstasy of pain at the final stroke of death; it shines like the pure flame of being burning up earthly sense with one fierce flash.

Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with starry gems; but thy sword, O lord of thunder, is wrought *with* uttermost beauty, terrible to behold or to think of.

LIV

I asked nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave I stood silent. I was alone by the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me and shouted, "Come with us, the morning is wear-ing on to noon." But I languidly lingered awhile lost in the midst of vague musings.

I heard nor thy steps as thou eamest. Thine eyes were sad when they fell on me; thy voice was tired as thou spokest low - "Ah, I am a thirsty traveller." I started *up* from my day-dreams and poured water from my jar on thy joined palms. The leaves rustled overhead; the cuckoo sang from the unseen dark, and perfume of *babla* flowers came from the bend of the road.

I stood speechless with shame when my name thou didst ask. Indeed, what had I done for thee to keep me in remembrance? But the memory that I could give water to thee to allay thy thirst will cling to my heart and enfold it in sweetness. The morning hour is late, the bind sings in weary notes, *neem* leaves rustle overhead and I sit and think and think.

LV

Langours upon your heart and the slumber is still on your eyes.

Has not the word come to you that the flower is reigning in splendour among thorns? Wake, oh, awaken! Let not the time pass in vain!

At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin solitude, my friend is sitting all alone. Deceive him not. Wake, oh, awaken!

What if the sky pants and trembles with the heat of the midday sun - what if the burning sand spreads its mantle of thirst

Is there no joy in the deep of your heart? At every footfall of yours, will not the harp of the road break out in sweet music of pain?

LVI

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of thy delight In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two.

LVII

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heartsweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my

life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.

LVIII

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song - the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

LIX

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart - this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead. The morning light has flooded my. eyes - this is thy message to my heart. Thy face is bent front above, thy eyes look down on my eyes, and my heart has touched thy feet.

LXIII

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; forget that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest

Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.

LXIV

On the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, "Maiden, where do you go, shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all dark and lonesome, -lend me your light!" She raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. "I have come to the river," she said, "to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west." I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

In the silence of gathering night I asked her, "Maiden, your lights are all lit -then where do you go with your lamp? My house is all dark and lonesome, - lend me your light" She raised her dark eyes on my face and stood for a moment doubtful. "I have come," she said at last, "to dedicate my lamp to the sky." I stood and watched her light uselessly burning in the void.

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, "Maiden, what is your quest, holding the lamp near your heart7 My house is all dark and lonesome, - lend me your light." She stopped for a minute and thought mid gazed at my face in the dark. "I have brought my light," she said, "to join the carnival of lamps." I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights.

LXV

What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life?

My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony?

Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me.

LXVI

She who ever had remained in the depth of my being, in the twilight of gleams and of glimpses; she who never opened her veils in the morning light, will be my last gift to thee, my God, folded in my final song.

Words have wooed yet failed to win her; persuasion has stretched to leer its eager arms in vain.

I have roamed from country to country keeping her in the core of my heart, and around her have risen and fallen the growth and decay of my life.

Over my thoughts and actions, my slumbers and dreams, she reigned yet dwelled alone and apart.

Many a man knocked at my door and asked for her and turned away in despair

There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition.

LXVII

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love : that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts . if peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

LXVIII

Thy sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine with arms outstretched and stands at my door the livelong day to carry back to thy feet clouds made of my tears and sighs and songs.

With fond delight thou wrappest about thy starry breast that mantle of misty cloud, turning it into numberless shapes and folds and colouring it with hues everchanging.

It is so light and so fleeting, tender and tearful and dark, that is why thou lovest it, O thou spotless and serene. And that is why it may cover thy awful white light with its pathetic shadows.

LXIX

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow ‘

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment

LXX

Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm? to be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy?

All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on.

Keeping steps with that restless, rapid music, seasons come dancing and pass away -colours, tunes, and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment.

LXXI

That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides, thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance - such is thy *maya*. Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separation has taken body in me.

The poignant song is echoed through all the sky in many-coloured tears and smiles, alarms and hopes; waves rise up and sink again, dreams break and form. In me is thy own defeat of self.

This screen that thou hast raised is painted with innumerable figures with the brush of the night and the day. Behind it thy seat is woven in wondrous mysteries of curves, casting away all barren lines of straightness.

The great pageant of thee and me has overspread the sky. With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee and me.

LXXII

He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches.

He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain.

He it is who weaves the web of this *maya* in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green, and lets peep out through the folds his feet, at whose touch I forget myself.

Days come and ages pass, and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow.

LXXIII

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

LXXIV

The day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth. It is time that I go to the scream to fill my pitcher.

The evening air is eager with the sad music of the water. Ah, it calls me out into the dusk. In the lonely lane there is no passer-by, the wind is up, the ripples are rampant in the river.

I know not if I shall come back home. I know not whom I shall chance to meet. There at the fording in the little boat the unknown man plays upon his lute.

LXXV

Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished.

The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and hamlets; yet its incessant stream winds towards the washing of thy feet.

The flower sweetens the air with its perfume; yet its last service is to offer itself to thee.

Thy worship does not impoverish the world.

From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to thee.

LXXVI

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.

Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face.

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face.

And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face,

LXXVII

I know thee as my God and stand apart - I do not know thee as my own and come closer. I know thee as my father and bow before thy feet - I do not grasp thy hand as my friend's.

I stand not where thou comest down and-ownest thyself as mine, there to clasp thee to my heart and take thee as my comrade.

Thou art the Brother amongst my brothers, but t heed them not, I divide not my earnings with them, thus sharing my all with thee.

In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men, and thus stand by thee. I shrink to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great waters of life.

LXXVIII

When the creation was new and all the stars shone in

their first splendour, the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang, "Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!"

But one cried of a sudden – "It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost"

The golden string of their harp snapped, their song stopped, and they cried in dismay – "Yes, that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!"

From that day the search is unceasing for her, and the cry goes on from one to the other that in her the world has lost its one joy!

Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves – "Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all!"

LXXIX

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight - let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days-pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing - let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When I sit by the roadside, tired and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house - let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs o' this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

LXXX

I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy fight, and thus I count months and. years separated from them.

If this be thy wish and if this be thy play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent.

LXXXI

On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers.

LXXXII

Time is endless in thy hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes.

Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest how to wait

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

We have no time to lose, and having no time we must scramble for our chances. We are too poor to be late.

And thus it is that time goes by while I give it to every querulous man who claims it, and thine altar is empty of all offerings to the last

At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut; but I find that yet there is time.

LXXXIII

Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow.

The stars have wrought their anklets of light to deck thy feet, but mine will hang upon thy breast

Wealth and fame come from thee and it is for thee to give or to withhold them. But this my sorrow is absolutely mine own, and when I bring it to thee as my offering thou rewardest me with thy grace.

LXXXIV

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys in human homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart.

LXXXV

When the warriors came out first from their master's hall, where had they hid their power?, Where were their armour and their arms?

They looked poor and helpless, and the arrows were showered upon them on the day they came out from their master's hall.

When the warriors marched back again to their master's hall, where did they hide their power?

They had dropped the sword and dropped the bow and the arrow; peace was on their foreheads, and they had left the fruits of their life behind them on the day they marched back again to their master's hall.

LXXXVI

Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home.

The night is dark and my heart is fearful - yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door.

I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.

He will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as my last offering to thee.

LXXXVII

In desperate hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking her I have come to thy door.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish - no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe.

LXXXVIII

Deity of the ruined temple! The broken strings of Vina sing no more your praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. The air is still and silent about you.

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers - the flowers that for your worship are offered no more.

Your worshipper of old wanders ever longing for favour still refused. In the eventide, when fires and shadows mingle with the gloom of dust, he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart

Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple. Many a night of worship goes away with lamp unlit.

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy stream of oblivion when their time is come.

Only the deity of the ruined temple remains un-worshipped in deathless neglect.

LXXXIX

No more noisy, loud words from me- such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time; and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum.

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

XC

On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life - I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

XCI

O thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!

Day after day have I kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.

All that I am, that I have, that I hope, and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

XCII

I know that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got - let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

XCIII

I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure.

Here I give back the keys of my door - and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

XCIV

At this time of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful.

Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart. I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine *is* not the red-brown dress of the traveller, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in my mind.

The evening star will come out when my voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies be struck up from the King's gateway.

XCV

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.

What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at – midnight[7].

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.

The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

XCVI

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed - let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come - let this be my parting word.

XCVII

When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous.

In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.

On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangest to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence.

Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.

XCVIII

I will deck thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered.

I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bonds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out to music like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears.

I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared.

From the blue sky an eye shall gaze upon me and summon me in silence. Nothing will be left for me, nothing whatever, and utter death shall I receive at thy feet

XCIX

When I give up the helm I know that the tittle has come for thee to take it. What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle.

Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit perfectly still where you are placed.

These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of wind, and trying to light them I forget all else again and again.

But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

C

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather beaten boat. The days are long past when my sport was to be tossed or waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes for ever, and, when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent

CI

Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and. touching my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey?

CII

I boasted among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in a works of mine. They come and ask me, "Who is he?" I know not how I answer them. I say, "Indeed, I cannot tell." They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling.

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out for my heart. They come and ask me Tell me all your meanings." I know not. how to answer them. I say, "Ah, who knows what they mean!" They smiled and go away in utter scorn. And you sit there smiling.

CIII

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my sense spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

2

Stray Birds

2

Stray Birds

I

STRAY birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.

And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.

II.

O troupe of little vagrants of the world, leave your footprints in my words.

III

THE world puts off its mask of vastness to its lover. It becomes small as one song, as one kiss of the eternal.

IV

IT is the tears of the earth that keep her smiles in bloom.

V

THE mighty desert is burning for the love of a blade of grass who shakes her head and laughs and flies away.

VI

If you shed tears when you miss the sun, you also miss the stars.

VII

THE sands in your way beg for your song and your movement, dancing water. Will you carry the burden of their lameness?

VIII

HER wistful face haunts my dreams like the rain at night.

IX

ONCE we dreamt that we were strangers.

We wake up to find that we were dear to each other.

X

SORROW is hushed into peace in my heart like the evening among the silent trees.

XI

SOME unseen fingers, like an idle breeze, are playing upon my heart the music of the ripples.

XII

"WHAT language is thine, O sea?"

The language of eternal question."

"What language is thy answer, O sky?"

"The language of eternal silence."

XIII

LISTEN, my heart, to the whispers of the world with which it makes love to you.

XIV

THE mystery of creation is like the darkness of night - it is great.

Delusions of knowledge are like the fog of the morning.

XV

Do not seat your love upon a precipice because it is high.

XVI

I SIT at my window this morning where the world like a passer-by stops for a moment, nods to me and goes.

XVII

THESE little thoughts are the rustle of leaves; they have their whisper of joy in my mind.

XVIII

WHAT you are you do not see, what you see is your shadow.

XIX

MY wishes are fools, they shout across thy songs, my Master.

Let me but listen.

XX

I CANNOT choose the best. The best chooses me.

XXI

THEY throw their shadows before them who carry their lantern on their back.

XIII

THAT I exist is a perpetual surprise which is life.

XXIII

"WE, the rustling leaves, have a voice that answers the storms, but who are you, so silent?" "I am a mere flower."

XXIV

REST belongs to the work as the eyelids to the eyes.

XXV

MAN is a born child, his power is the power of growth.

XXVI

GOD expects answers for the flowers he sends us, not for the sun and the earth.

XXVII

THE light that plays, like a naked child, among the green leaves happily knows not that man can lie.

XXVIII

O BEAUTY, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror.

XXIX

My heart beats her waves at the shore of the world and writes upon it her signature in tears with the words, "I love thee."

XXX

"MOON, for what do you wait?"

"To salute the sun for whom I must make way."

XXXI

THE trees come up to my window like the yearning voice of the dumb earth.

XXXII

HIS own mornings are new surprises to God.

XXXIII

LIFE finds its wealth by the claims of the world, and its worth by the claims of love.

XXXIV

THE dry river-bed finds no thanks for its past.

XXXV

THE bird wishes it were a cloud. The cloud wishes it were a bird

XXXVI

THE waterfall sings,. "I find my song, when I find my freedom."

XXXVII

I CANNOT tell why this heart languishes in silence.

It is for small needs it never asks, or knows or remembers.

XXXVIII

WOMAN, when you move about in your household service your limbs sing like a hill stream among its pebbles.

XXXIX

THE sun goes to cross the Western sea, leaving its last salutation to the East.

XL

Do not blame your food because you have no appetite.

XLI

THE trees, like the longings of the earth, stand a-tiptoe to peep at the heaven.

XLII

YOU smiled and talked to me of nothing and I felt that for this I had been waiting long.

XLIII

THE fish in the water is silent, the animal on the earth is noisy, the bird in the air is singing.

But Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth and the music of the air.

XLIV

THE world rushes on over the strings of the lingering heart making the music of sadness.

XLV

HE has made his weapons his gods.

When his weapons win he is defeated himself.

XLVI

GOD finds himself by creating.

XLVII

SHADOW, with her veil drawn, follows Light in secret meekness, with her silent steps of love.

XLVIII

THE stars are not afraid to appear like fireflies.

XLIX

I THANK thee that I am none of the wheels of power but I am one with the living creatures that are crushed by it.

L

THE mind, sharp but not broad, sticks at every point but does not move.

LI

YOUR idol is shattered in the dust to prove that God's dust is greater than your idol.

LII

MAN does not reveal himself in his history, he struggles up through it.

LIII

WHILE the glass lamp rebukes the earthen for calling it cousin, the moon rises, and the glass lamp, with a bland smile, calls her; "My dear, dear sister."

LIV

LIKE the meeting of the seagulls and the waves we meet and come near. The seagulls fly off, the waves roll away and we depart.

LV

MY day is done, and I am like a boat drawn on the beach, listening to the dance-music of the tide in the evening.

LVI

LIFE is given to us, we earn it by giving it.

LVII

WE come nearest to the great when we are great in humility.

LVIII

THE sparrow is sorry for the peacock at the burden of its tail.

LIX

NEVER be afraid of the moments - thus sings the voice of the everlasting.

LX

THE hurricane seeks the shortest road by the no-road and suddenly ends its search in the Nowhere.

LXI

TAKE my wine in my own cup, friend.

It loses its wreath of foam when poured into that of others.

LXII

THE Perfect decks itself in beauty for the love of the Imperfect.

LXIII

GOD says to man, "I heal you, therefore I hurt, love you, therefore punish."

LXIV

THANK the flame for its light, but do not forget the lampholder standing in the shade with constancy of patience.

LXV

TINY grass, your steps are small, but you possess the earth under your tread.

LXVI

THE infant flower opens its bud and cries, "Dear World, please do not fade."

LXVII

GOD grows weary of great kingdoms, but never of little flowers.

LXVIII

WRONG cannot afford defeat but Right can.

LXIX

"I GIVE my whole water in joy," sings the waterfall, "though little of it is enough for the thirsty."

LXX

WHERE is the fountain that throws up these flowers in a ceaseless outbreak of ecstasy?

LXXI

THE woodcutter's axe begged for its handle from the tree.

The tree gave it

LXXII

IN my solitude of heart I feel the sigh of this widowed evening veiled with mist and rain.

LXXII

CHASTITY is a wealth that comes from abundance of love.

LXXIV

THE mist, like love, plays upon the heart of the hills and brings out surprises of beauty.

LXXV

WE read the world wrong and say that it deceives us.

LXXVI

THE poet wind is out over the sea and the forest to seek his own voice.

LXXVII

EVERY child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.

LXXVIII

THE grass seeks her crowd in the earth. The tree seeks his solitude of the sky

LXXIX

MAN barricades against himself.

LXXX

YOUR voice, my friend, wanders in my heart, like the muffled sound of the sea among these listening pines.

LXXXI

WHAT is this unseen flame of darkness whose sparks are the stars?

LXXXII

LET life be beautiful like summer flowers and death like autumn leaves.

LXXXIII

HE who wants to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds the gate open.

LXXXIV

IN death the many becomes one; in life the one becomes many.

Religion will be one when God is dead.

LXXXV

THE artist is the lover of Nature, therefore he is her slave and her master.

LXXXVI

"How far are you from me, O Fruit[7]"

"I am hidden in your heart, O Flower."

LXXXVII

THIS longing is for the one who is felt in the dark, but not seen in the day.

LXXXVIII

"YOU are the big drop of dew under the lotus leaf, I am the smaller one on its upper side," said the dewdrop to the lake.

LXXXIX

THE scabbard is content to be dull when it protects the keenness of the sword.

XC

IN darkness the One appears as uniform; in the light the One appears as manifold.

XCI

THE great earth makes herself hospitable with the help of the grass.

XCII

THE birth and death of the leaves are the rapid whirls of the eddy whose wider circles move slowly among stars.

XCIII

POWER said to the world, "You are mine."

The world kept it prisoner on her throne.

Love said to the world, "I am thine."

The world gave it the freedom of her house.

XCIV

THE mist is like the earth's desire.

It hides the sun for whom she cries.

XCV

BE still, my heart, these great trees are prayers.

XCVI

THE noise of the moment scoff's at the music of the Eternal.

XCVII

I THINK of other ages that floated upon the stream of life and love and death and are forgotten, and I feel the freedom of passing away.

XCVIII

THE sadness of my soul is her bride's veil.

It waits to be lifted in the night.

XCIX

DEATH'S stamp gives value to the coin of life; making it possible to buy with life what is truly precious.

C

THE cloud stood humbly in a corner of the sky. The morning crowned it with splendour.

CI

THE dust receives insult and in return offers her flowers.

CII

DO not linger to gather flowers to keep them, but walk on, for flowers will keep themselves blooming all your way.

CIII

ROOTS are the branches down in the earth. Branches are roots in the air.

CIV

THE music of the far-away summer flutters around the autumn seeking its former nest.

CV

DO not insult your friend by lending him merits from your own pocket.

CVI

THE touch of the nameless days clings to my heart like mosses round the old tree.

CVII

THE echo mocks her origin to prove she is the original

CVIII

GOD is ashamed when the prosperous boasts of his special favour.

CIX

I CAST my own shadow upon my path, because I have a lamp that has not been lighted.

CX

MAN goes into the noisy crowd to drown his own clamour of silence.

CXI

THAT which ends in exhaustion is death, but the perfect endings is in the endless.

CXII

THE sun has his simple robe of light. The clouds are decked with gorgeousness.

CXIII

THE hills are like shouts of children who raise their arms, trying to catch stars.

CXIV

THE road is lonely in its crowd, for it is not loved.

CXV

THE power that boasts of its mischiefs is laughed at by the yellow leaves that fall, and clouds that pass by."

CXVI

THE earth hums to me to-day in the sun, like a woman at her spinning, some ballad of the ancient time in a forgotten tongue.

CXVII

THE grass-blade is worthy of the great world where it grows.

CXVIII

DREAM is a wife who must talk,

Sleep is a husband who silently suffers.

CXIX

THE night kisses the fading day whispering to his ear, "I am death, your mother. I am to give you fresh birth."

CXX

I FEEL thy beauty, dark night, like that of the loved woman when she has put out the lamp.

CXXI

I CARRY in my world that flourished the worlds that have failed.

CXXII

DEAR friend, I feel the silence of your great thoughts of many a deepening eventide on this beach when I listen to these waves.

CXXIII

THE bird thinks it is an act of kindness to give the fish a lift in the air.

CXXIV

"IN the moon thou sendest thy love letters to me," said the night to the sun.

"I leave my answers in tears upon the grass."

CXXV

THE Great is a born child; when he dies he gives his great childhood tothe world.

CXXVI

NOT hammer-strokes, but dance of the water sings the pebbles into perfection.

CXXVII

BEES sip honey from flowers and hum their thanks when they leave.

The gaudy butterfly is sure that the flowers owe thanks to him.

CXXVIII

TO be outspoken is easy when you do not wait to speak the complete truth.

CXXIX

ASKS the Possible of the Impossible, "Where is your dwelling- place?"

"In the dreams of the impotent," comes the answer.

CXXX

IF you shut your door to all errors truth will be shut out

CXXXI

I HEAR some rustle of things behind my sadness of heart, - I cannot see them.

CXXXII

LEISURE in its activity is work.

The stillness of the sea stirs in waves.

CXXXIII

THE leaf becomes flower when it loves.

The flower becomes fruit when it worships.

CXXXIV

THE roots below the earth claim no rewards for making the branches fruitful.

CXXXV

THIS rainy evening the wind is restless.

I look at the swaying branches and ponder over the greatness of all things.

CXXXVI

STORM of midnight, like a giant child awakened in the untimely dark, has begun to play and shout

CXXXVII

THOU raisest thy waves vainly to follow thy lover, O sea, thou lonely bride of the storm.

CXXXVIII

"I AM ashamed of my emptiness," said the Word to the Work.

"I know how poor I am when I see you," said the Work to the Word.

CXXXIX

TIME is the wealth of change, but the clock in its parody makes it mere change and no wealth.

CXL

TRUTH in her dress finds facts too right. In fiction she moves with ease.

CXLI

WHEN I travelled to here and to there, I was tired of thee, O Road, but now when thou leadest me to everywhere I am wedded to thee in love.

CXLII

LET me think that there is one among those stars that guides my life through the dark unknown.

CXLIII

WOMAN, with the grace of your fingers you touched my things and order came out like music.

CXLIV

ONE sad voice has its nest among the ruins of the years. It sings to me in the night, "I loved you."

CXLV

THE flaming fire warns me off by its own glow.

Save me from the dying embers hidden under ashes.

CXLVI

I Have my stars in the sky,

But oh for my little lamp unlit in my house.

CXLVII

THE dust of the dead words clings to thee. Wash thy soul with silence.

CXLVIII

GAPS are left in life through which comes the sad music of death.

CXLIX

THE world has opened its heart of light in the morning. Come out, my heart, with thy love to meet it.

CL

MY thoughts shimmer with these shimmering leaves and my heart sings with the touch of this sunlight; my life is glad to be floating with all things into the blue of space, into the dark of time.

CLI

GOD'S great power is in the gentle breeze, not in the storm.

CLII

THIS is a dream in which things are all loose and they oppress. I shall find them gathered in thee when I awake and shall be free.

CLIII

"WHO is there to take up my duties?" asked the setting sun.

"I shall do what I can, my Master,"said the earthen lamp.

CLIV

BY plucking her petals you do not gather the beauty of the flower.

CLV

SILENCE will carry your voice like the nest that holds the sleeping birds.

CLVI

THE Great walks with the Small without fear.

The Middling keeps aloof.

CLVII

THE night opens the flowers in secret and allows the day to get thanks.

CLVIII

POWER takes as ingratitude the writhings of its victims.

CLIX

WHEN we rejoice in our fullness, then we can part with our fruits with joy.

CLX

THE raindrops kissed the earth and whispered, "We are thy homesick children, mother, come back to thee from the heaven."

CLXI

THE cobweb pretends to catch dewdrops and catches flies.

CLXII

LOVE! when you come with the burning lamp of pain in your hand, I can see your face and know you as bliss.

CLXIII

"THE learned say that your lights will one day be no more," said the firefly to the stars.

The stars made no answer.

CLXIV

IN the dusk of the evening the bird of some early dawn

comes to the nest of my silence.

CLXV

THOUGHTS pass in my mind like flocks of ducks in the sky.

I hear the voice of their wings.

CLXVI

THE canal loves to think that rivers exist solely to supply it with water.

CLXVII

THE world has kissed my soul with its pain, asking for its return in songs.

CLXVIII

THAT which oppresses me, is it my soul trying to come out in the open, or the soul of the world knocking at my heart for its entrance?

CLXIX

THOUGHT feeds itself with its own words and grows.

CLXX

I HAVE dipped the vessel of my heart into this silent hour; it has filled with love.

CLXXI

EITHER you have work or you have not.

When you have to say, "Let us do something," then begins mischief.

CLXXII

THE sunflower blushed to own the nameless flower as her kin.

The sun rose and smiled on it, saying, "Are you well, my darling?"

CLXXIII

"WHO drives me forward like fate?" "The Myself striding on my back."

CLXXIV

THE clouds fill the water-cups of the river, hiding themselves in the distant hills.

CLXXV

I SPILL water from my water-jar as I walk on my way. Very little remains for my home.

CLXXVI

THE water in a vessel is sparkling; the water in the sea is dark.

The small truth has words that are clear; the great truth has great silence.

CLXXVII

YOUR smile was the flowers of your own fields, your talk was the rustle of your own mountain pines, but your heart was the woman that we all know.

CLXXVIII

IT is the little things that I leave behind for my loved ones, - great things are for everyone.

CLXXIX

WOMAN, thou hast encircled the world's heart with the depth of thy tears as the sea has the earth,

CLXXX

THE sunshine greets me with a smile.

The rain, his sad sister, talks to my heart

CLXXXI

MY flower of the day dropped its petals forgotten.

In the evening it ripens into a golden fruit of memory.

CLXXXII

I AM like the road in the night listening to the footfalls of its memories in silence.

CLXXXIII

THE evening sky to me is like a window, and a lighted lamp, and a waiting behind it.

CLXXXIV

HE who is too busy doing good finds no time to be good.

CLXXXV

I AM the autumn cloud, empty of rain, see my fullness in the field of ripened rice.

CLXXXVI

THEY hated and killed and men praised them.

But God in shame hastens to hide its memory under the green grass.

CLXXXVII

TOES are the fingers that have forsaken their past

CLXXXVIII

DARKNESS travels towards light, but blindness towards death.

CLXXXIX

THE pet dog suspects the universe for scheming to take its place.

CXC

SIT still, my heart, do not raise your dust. Let the world find its way to you.

CXCI

THE bow whispers to the arrow before it speeds forth – "Your freedom is mine."

CXCII

WOMAN, in your laughter you have the music of the fountain of life.

CXCIII

A mind all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it.

CXCIV

GOD loves man's lamp-lights better than his own great stars.

CXCV

THIS world is the world of wild storms kept tame with the music of beauty.

CXCVI

"MY hear is like the golden casket of thy kiss," said the sunset cloud to the sun.

CXCVII

BY touching you may kill, by keeping away you may possess.

CXCVIII

THE cricket's chirp and the patter of rain come to me through the dark, like the rustle of dreams from my past youth.

CXCIX

"I HAVE lost my dewdrop," cries the flower to the morning sky that has lost all its stars.

CC

THE burning log bursts in flame and cries,- "This is my flower, my death."

CCI

THE wasp thinks that the honey-hive of the neighbouring bees is too small.

His neighbours ask him to build one still smaller.

CCII

"I CANNOT keep your waves," says the bank to the river.

"Let me keep your footprints in my heart."

CCIII

THE day, with the noise of this little earth, drowns the silence of all worlds.

CCIV

THE song feels the infinite in the air, the picture in the earth, the poem in the air and the earth;

For its words have meaning that walks and music that soars.

CCV

WHEN the sun goes down to the West, the East of his morning stands before him in silence.

CCVI

LET me not put myself wrongly to my world and set it against me.

CCVII

PRAISE shames me, for I secretly beg for it.

CCVIII

LET my doing nothing when I have nothing to do become untroubled in its depth of peace like the evening in the seashore when the water is silent.

CCIX

MAIDEN, your simplicity, like the blueness of the lake, reveals your depth of truth.

CCX

THE best does not come alone.

It comes with the company of the all.

CCXI

GOD'S right hand is gentle, but terrible is his left hand.

CCXII

MY evening came among the alien trees and spoke in a language which my morning stars did not know.

CCXIII

NIGHT'S darkness is a bag that bursts with the gold of the dawn.

CCXIV

OUR desire lends the colours of the rainbow to the mere mists and vapours of life.

CCXV

GOD waits to win back his own flowers as gifts from man's hands.

CCXVI

MY sad thoughts tease me asking me their own names.

CCXVII

THE service of the fruit is precious, the service of the flower is sweet, but let my service be the service of the leaves in its shade of humble devotion.

CCXVIII

MY heart has spread its sails to the idle winds for the shadowy island of Anywhere.

CCXIX

MEN are cruel, but Man is kind

CCXX

MAKE me thy cup and let my fullness be for thee and for thine.

CCXXI

THE storm is like the cry of some god in pain whose love the earth refuses.

CCXXII

THE world does not leak because death is not a crack.

CCXXIII

LIFE has become richer by the love that has been lost.

CCXXIV

MY friend, your great heart shone with the sunrise of the East like the snowy summit of a lonely hill in the dawn.

CCXXV

THE fountain of death makes the still water of life play.

CCXXVI

THOSE who have everything but thee, my God, laugh at those who have nothing but thyself.

CCXXVII

THE movement of life has its rest in its own music.

CCXXVIII

KICKS only raise dust and not crops from the earth.

CCXXIX

OUR names are the light that glows on the sea waves night and then dies without leaving its signature

CCXXX

LET him only see the thorns who has eyes to see the rose.

CCXXXI

SET the bird's wings with gold and it will never again soar in the sky.

CCXXXII

THE same lotus of our clime blooms here in the alien water with the same sweetness, under another name.

CCXXXIII

IN heart's perspective the distance looms large.

CCXXXIV

THE moon has her light all over the sky, her dark spots to herself.

CCXXXV

DO not say, "It is morning," and dismiss it with a name of yesterday.

See it for the first time as a newborn child that has no name.

CCXXXVI

SMOKE boasts to the sky, and Ashes to the earth, that they are brothers to the fire.

CCXXXVII

THE raindrop whispered to the jasmine, "Keep me in your heart for ever."

The jasmine sighed, "Alas," and dropped to the ground.

CCXXXVIII

TIMID thoughts, do not be afraid of me.

I am a poet

CCXXXIX

THE dim silence of my mind seems filled with crickets' chirps - the grey twilight of sound.

CCXL

ROCKETS, your insult to the stars follows yourself back to the earth.

CCXLI

THOU hast led me through my crowded travels of the day to my evening's loneliness. I wait for its meaning through the stillness of the night.

CCXLII

THIS life is the crossing of a sea, where we meet in the same narrow ship.

In death we reach the shore and go to our different worlds.

CCXLIII

THE stream of truth flows through its channels of mistakes.

CCXLIV

MY heart is homesick to-day for the one sweet hour across the sea of time.

CCXLV

THE bird-song is the echo of the morning light back from the earth.

CCXLVI

"ARE you too proud to kiss me?" the morning light asks the buttercup.

CCXLVII

"HOW may I sing to thee and worship, O Sun?" asked the little flower. "By the simple silence of thy purity," answered the sun.

CCXLVIII

MAN is worse than an animal when he is an animal.

CCXLIX

DARK clouds become heaven's flowers when kissed by light.

CCL

LET not the sword-blade mock its handle for being blunt.

CCLI

THE night's silence, like a deep like a deep lamp is burning with the light of its Milky Way.

AROUND the sunny island of life swells day and night death's limitless song of the sea.

CCLIII

IS not this mountain like a flower, with its petals of hills, drinking the sunlight?

CCLIV

THE real with its meaning read wrong and emphasis misplaced is the unreal.

CCLV

FIND your beauty, my heart, from the world's movement, like the boat that has the grace of the wind and the water.

CCLVI

THE eyes are not proud of their sight but of their eyeglasses.

CCLVII

I LIVE in this little world of mine and am afraid to make it the least less. Lift me into thy world and let me have the freedom gladly to lose my all.

CCLVIII

THE false can never grow into truth by growing in power.

CCLIX

MY heart, with its lapping waves of song, longs to caress this green world of the sunny day.

CCLX

WAYSIDE grass, love the star, then your dreams will come out in flowers

CCLXI

LET your music, like a sword, pierce the noise of the market to its heart

CCLXII

THE trembling leaves of this tree touch my heart like the fingers of an infant child.

CCLXIII

HE little flower lies in the dust.

It sought the path of the butterfly.

CCLXIV

I AM in the world of the roads.

The night comes. Open thy gate, thou world of the home.

CCLXV

I HAVE sung the songs of thy day.

In the evening let me carry thy lamp through the stormy path.

CCLXVI

I DO not ask thee into the house.

Come into my infinite loneliness, my Lover.

CCLXVII

DEATH belongs to life as birth does.

The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the laying of it down.

CCLXVIII

I HAVE learnt the simple meaning of thy whispers in flowers and sunshine - teach me to know thy words in pain and death.

CCLXIX

THE night's flower was late when the morning kissed her, she shivered and sighed and dropped to the ground.

CCLXX

THROUGH the sadness of all things 1 hear the crooning of the Eternal Mother.

CCLXXI

I CAME to your shore as a stranger, I lived in your house as a guest, I leave your door as a friend, my earth.

CCLXXII

LET my thoughts come to you, when I am gone, like the afterglow of sunset at the margin of starr-y silence.

CCLXXIII

LIGHT in my heart the evening star of rest and then let the night whisper to me of love.

CCLXXIV

I AM a child in the dark.

I stretch my hands through the coverlet of night for thee, Mother.

CCLXXV

THE day of work is done. Hide my face in your arms, Mother.

Let me dream.

CCLXXVI

THE lamp of meeting burns long; it goes out in a moment at the parting.

CCLXXVII

ONE word keep for me in thy silence, O World, when I am dead, "I have loved."

CCLXXVIII

WE live in this world when we love it.

CCLXXIX

LET the dead have the immortality of fame, but the living the immortality of love.

CCLXXX

I HAVE seen thee as the half-awakened child sees his mother in the dusk of the dawn and then smiles and sleeps again.

CCLXXXI

I SHALL die again and again to know that life is inexhaustible.

CCLXXXI

WHILE I was passing with the crowd in the road I saw thy smile from the balcony and I sang and forgot all noise.

CCLXXXIII

LOVE is life in its fulness like the cup with its wine.

CCLXXXIV

THEY light their own lamps and sing their own words in their temples.

But the birds sing thy name in thine own morning light, - for thy name is joy.

CCLXXXV

LEAD me in the centre of thy silence to fill my heart with songs.

CCLXXXVI

LET them live who choose in their own hissing world of fireworks.

My heart longs for thy stars, my God.

CCLXXXVII

LOVE'S pain sang round my life like the unplumbed sea, and love's joy sang like birds in its flowering groves.

CCLXXXVIII

PUT out the lamp when thou wishest.

I shall know thy darkness and shall love it.

CCLXXXIX

WHEN I stand before thee at the day's end thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing.

CCXC

SOME day I shall sing to thee in the sunrise of some other world, "I have seen thee before in the light of the earth, in the love of man."

CCXCI

CLOUDS come floating into my life from other days no longer to shed rain or usher storm but to give colour to my sunset sky.

CCXCII

TRUTH raises against itself the strorm that scatters its seeds broadcast.

CCXCIII

THE storm of the last night has crowned this morning with golden peace.

CCXCIV

TRUTH seems to come with its final word; and the final word gives birth to its next.

CCXCV

BLESSED is he whose fame does not outshine his truth.

CCXCVI

SWEETNESS of thy name fills my heart when I forget mine - like thy morning sun when the mist is melted.

CCXCVII

THE silent night has the beauty of the mother and the clamorous day of the child.

CCXCVIII

THE world loved man when he smiled. The world became 'afraid of him when he laughed.

CCXCIX

GOD waits for man to regain his childhood in wisdom.

CCC

LET me feel this world as thy love taking form, then my love will help it.

CCCI

THY sunshine smiles upon the winter days of my heart, never doubting of its spring flowers.

CCCII

GOD kisses the finite in his love and man the infinite.

CCCIII

THOU Crossest desert lands of barren years to reach the moment 'off ulfilment.

CCCIV

GOD'S silence ripens man's thoughts into speech.

CCCV

THOU wilt find, Eternal Traveller, marks of thy footsteps across my songs.

CCCVI

LET me not shame thee, Father, who displayest thy glory in thy children.

CCCVII

CHEERLESS is the day, the light under frowning clouds is like a punished child with traces of tears on its pale cheeks, and the cry of the wind is like the cry of a wounded world. But I know I am travelling to meet my Friend.

CCCVIII

TONIGHT there is a stir among the palm leaves, a swell in the sea, Full Moon, like the heart-throb of the world. From what unknown sky hast thou carried in thy silence the aching secret of love?

CCCIX

I DREAM of a star, an island of light, where I shall be born and in the depth of its quickening leisure my life will ripen its works like the ricefield in the autumn sun.

CCCX

THE smell of the wet earth in the rain rises like a great chant of praise from the voiceless multitude of the insignificant.

CCCXI

THAT love can ever lose is a fact that we cannot accept as truth.

CCCXII

WE shall know some day that death can never rob us of that which our soul has gained, for her gains are one with herself.

CCCXIII

GOD comes to me in the dusk of my evening with the flowers from my past kept fresh in his basket.

CCCXIV

WHEN all the strings of my life will be tuned, my Master, then at every touch of thine will come out the music of love.

CCCXV

LET me live truly, my Lord, so that death to me become true.

CCCXVI

MAN'S history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.

CCCXVII

I FEEL thy gaze upon my heart this moment like the sunny silence of the morning upon the lonely field whose harvest is over.

CCCXVIII

I LONG for the Island of Songs across this heaving Sea of Shouts.

CCCXIX

THE prelude of the night is commenced in the music of the sunset, in its solemn hymn to the ineffable dark.

CCCXX

I HAVE scaled the peak and found no shelter in fame's bleak and barren height. Lead me, my Guide, before the light fades, into the valley of quiet where life's harvest mellows into golden wisdom.

CCCXXI

THINGS look phantastic in this dimness of the dusk - the spires whose bases are lost in the dark and tree-tops like blots of ink. I shall wait for the morning and wake up to see thy city in the light.

CCCXXII

I HAVE suffered and despaired and known death and I am glad that I am in this great world.

CCCXXIII

THERE are tracts in my life that are bare and silent. They are the open spaces where my busy days had their light and air.

CCCXXIV

RELEASE me from my unfulfilled past clinging to me from behind making death difficult.

CCCXXV

LET this be my last word, that I trust in thy love.

3

Four Chapters

3

Four Chapters

One Chapters

THE scene is a Calcutta tea-shop. On one side is a little room in which a few school and college text-books, mostly second-hand, are displayed for sale. Among them are some English translations of modern Continental stories and plays. These the students read, so far as they may, as they turn over the pages. To this no objection is offered by the owner of the shop, Kanai Gupta, a retired sub-inspector of police.

For those who want to have their tea in comparative privacy, a portion of the front room is partitioned off by a screen of tattered sacking. This part of the shop shows to-day signs of special preparation. The inadequacy of chairs and stools has been made good by sundry packing cases marked 'Darjeeling Tea'. The tea-service also lacks uniformity, of course; blue enamel cups and saucers supplement white porcelain. In a broken-handled milk jug on the table is a bunch of flowers.

It is nearly three in the afternoon. The boys, when they had invited Ela, had set two-thirty as the exact time, and had specially requested her not to be a minute late. The reason for fixing this untimely hour was that only then would the shop be empty. Ela had come exactly on time, but not one of the boys was to be seen anywhere. As she sat alone, wondering whether she had mistaken the date, she was startled to see Indranath coming into the room-surely the last place where he could have been expected to appear.

Indranath had spent many years in Europe, and had made a name for himself in scientific circles. He was qualified to hold the highest positions. But, while in Europe, he had happened on a few rare occasions to meet an Indian political suspect, on which ground he found, when he came back home, that every door to advancement was closed against him. At last, through the special recommendation of a distinguished English scientist, he secured the post of a teacher, but under a far less competent superior. Incompetency and intense envy go hand in hand, so that all kinds of obstacles were placed in the way of his attempts to continue his scientific researches, until, finally, he was transferred to a college in which there was no laboratory.

The bitter realization at length dawned on Indranath that in his own country it was hopeless for him to dream of rising to the height of his powers, although he felt sure that elsewhere he could have won recognition and honour. Here he stood condemned to turn the mill of routine teaching to the end of his working days, after which a meagre pension would carry him on somehow to the end of life itself. To such prostitution of his talents he was utterly unprepared to submit. Eventually he started a small class for teaching French and German, and also helped science students with their botany and geology. In some fissure in the depths of this little institution of his, there lodged a seed of secret purpose, which spread its underground ramifications, across prison yards, far and wide through the country.

'You here, Ela?' remarked Indranath.

'You forbade the boys to come to my house,' replied Ela, 'so they asked me to a tea here.'

'That I know already. So I found urgent work for them elsewhere. I have now come to apologize to you on their behalf, and to settle their bill.'

'Why was it so necessary to break up our party?'

'To suppress the fact that your relations with the boys are cordial. You'll see in the newspapers tomorrow that I've also sent in an article over your signature.'

'If it has been written by you, no one will believe my signature to be genuine. Your style can't so easily be palmed off on another.'

I've not only disguised my handwriting but seen to it that the article shows little of intelligence and much of moral sentiment.'

'In what way?'

'Well, you have written that our boys are going to ruin the country by their untimely attempts to rouse it. You have piteously appealed to the women of Bengal to do their best to cool the overheated heads of these impossible jackanapes. But, you have pointed out, that can't be done by good counsel offered from afar. The women must go amongst them, must go into their very dens of intoxication, even at the risk of being themselves laid open to the fate of political suspects. You women are of the mother sex, you have said, and if you can save these hapless misguided boys by taking their punishment on yourselves, such sacrifice, even unto death, would be worth while. You know, Ela, how often you put forward your claim to belong to the mother sex. I've only soaked those words in salt tears and put them into the writing; when the mother-loving reader reads them his eyes will brim over. After this, if, you were a man, it wouldn't have been impossible for you to get the tide of Rai Bahadur.'

'I'll not deny,' said Ela, after a pause, 'that what you've made me say could have been my real sentiments. I do so love these horrid boys - where can you find their equals? I've been with them since we were in college together and I lost my parents. At first, I must confess, they used to write all kinds of things about the girl students on the blackboard. Their pranks made some of the girls angry, but I always sided with the boys. I knew it was because they were unused to meet our sex in these surroundings that they couldn't

behave properly. When they got used to us their whole tone softened down to naturalness-occasionally perhaps, to an even softer note. But what of that? I know from my own experience how easy it is to get on with the boys, if only the girl doesn't turn huntress, consciously or unconsciously. Then I saw them rushing off, one by one, the best of them, who had no touch of vulgarity in them, whose true manhood knew how to respect women-

'You mean,' interjected Indranath with a smile, 'those whose finer emotions have not turned into unsavoury ferment, like those of the average town boy?'

'Yes, I mean just those like myself, who come from the country. It's they that I've seen desperately running after the messenger of death. Am I to remain safely living in my corner while they rush to their doom? Let me tell you the truth, Master. The more we go on, the more does our purpose cease to be purpose, and becomes mere intoxication. These splendid boys are being sacrificed at the altar of some blind, monstrous idol. It's breaking my heart!'

'My child,' said Indranath, 'such revulsion of spirit is common on the eve of a great battle. The *Mahabharata* tells us how the peerless warrior, Arjuna himself, was thus afflicted at the outset of the Kurukshetra war. As for me, I nearly fainted with horror when as a medical student I had to dissect my first corpse. This kind of revulsion is itself revolting. In the struggle for power, the cult of cruelty comes first, to be followed at last, it may be, by that of mercy. You take pride in belonging to the mother sex. But that's nothing to glory in. The mother instinct is one of nature's devices, found in the lower animals too. Much the bigger thing is that your sex is the embodiment of power. You have to prove this. Give strength, give men strength.'

'It's with these big words that you keep us deluded. You claim far more than we have in us to give.'

'The very force of the claim brings about its fulfilment. What we persist in believing you to be, that you shall become. You also, must so believe in us, that our strivings may come true.'

'I love to hear you talk. But no more to-day. Now I've something to say to you.'

'Very well, then,' agreed Indranath, 'let's go into the back room.'

They passed out together into the dimness of the room behind. Its only furniture was an old table and some benches and a map of India on the wall.

'I can't help telling you,' began Ela, 'that you have done a grievous wrong!' Only Ela could venture to say such a thing straight to Indranath, and, even for her, it was not easy; her voice betrayed a strain.

To say that Indranath was handsome would be to leave much unsaid. From him radiated a tense, inflexible attraction. It was as if there was a thunderbolt in the depths of his being, of which the rumblings could not be heard, but only the cruel flashes sometimes seen. In his looks there was a polished urbanity like a sharpened knife. Harsh words were not difficult for him to speak, but he spoke them with a smile. Anger never raised his voice, but only changed the quality of his laugh. He took just so much care of his appearance as was necessary for his dignity, and no more. His short-clipped hair needed no special attention to be kept in place. His complexion was almond, with just a touch of colour in his face. In his glance was the glint of keen insight, in his compressed lips unyielding resolve. He could make the most impossible claims without a qualm, secure in the conviction that they could not be lightly disregarded. Some believed that his intelligence was unusual, others that his power was super natural; so that some had limitless veneration for him, others an unaccountable dread. Students all over the country looked on him as an uncrowned king.

'What is the wrong I have done?' asked Indranath, smiling.

'You have laid on Uma the command to get married when she doesn't at all want to.' 'Who says she doesn't?' 'She says so herself.'

'It's possible she doesn't know her own mind, or won't speak it.'

'Didn't she swear to you that she would never marry?'

'The promise was truly meant then, but it is no longer true now. Truth cannot be created by word of mouth. She herself would have broken her pledge. I am saving her from that disgrace by letting it be done under compulsion.'

'The responsibility for keeping or not keeping her word was hers alone-what if she decided to break it and accept the consequences?'

'Once breaking is started, one never know how far it will spread, and the losses would fall on all of us.'

'The poor girl is weeping her heart out.'

'In that case I'll shorten the period of her tribulation till the day after to-morrow'

'What of the rest of her life that will be left over after the day after to-morrow?'

'The tears shed by girls before marriage are like the proverbial morning clouds that disperse on the rising of the sun.'

'Oh, you are cruel!'

'That's because God, who loves man, is Himself cruel. His indulgence is for the lower animals.'

'Surely you know that Sukumar is the one whom Uma loves?

'That's just why I am separating them.'

'As a punishment for their love?'

'Punishment for love is nonsense. You might as well

talk of punishing a person for getting smallpox. All the same, it's better to send the sufferer out of the house to the hospital.'

'Why not let Uma marry Sukumar, then?' 'What crime has poor Sukumar committed-one the of the best of our boys?'

'Suppose he himself wants to marry Uma?' 'Not at all unlikely.

That's why I am in such a hurry. It's so easy for a girl to turn the head of a gallant fellow like Sukumar. A few teardrops, duly shed, would be enough to convince him that his civility was tantamount to encouragement. Are you vexed at my bluntness?'

'Why should I be vexed? Do I not know from experience with what silent skill women have often continued to bring about this encouragement, and how the men have had to bear the brunt of it afterwards! The time has come for dealing equal justice to the sexes; and the girls cannot bear me because I try to do that. Any how, what has the victim, to whom Uma is to be married, to say to it?'

'He's one of those spineless good fellows who have no such worries as opinions of their own. Every woman of Bengal is for him a special masterpiece of the Creator. This kind of human rubbish has to be thrown out of the inner circle, and the most suitable dustbin for them is marriage.'

'If these mutual attractions cause you so much misgiving, why group the sexes together at all?'

'Because I've no use either for ascetics who mortify their bodies with sackcloth and ashes or for self-immolators who reduce to ashes their natural passions. We want fire-worshippers, but if any of these kindle the fire within themselves, they have to be got rid of. Our conflagration must rage throughout the land, and that cannot be achieved with those whose fire has gone out, or those who cannot control their own flame.'

Ela had been gravely listening to his words. Now she dropped her eyes and murmured, 'Let me leave you, then.'

'How can you expect me to put up with such a loss?'

'I suspect you do not know me.'

'Who says I don't? Did I not notice it the very day a tinge of colour crept into your white *khadi* homespun? That told me of the rosy dawn within. Am I blind to how your ears are astrain for the first sound of certain footsteps? When I came into your room last Friday, could I not feel that it was someone else you were expecting?'

Ela kept silent, reddening to the tips of her ears.

'You love someone,' pursued Indranath. 'What of it? Your heart's not made of stone. I know who it is you love. In that also I see nothing to be ashamed of.'

Ela was remembering the day five years ago, when, at a gathering at her uncle's house, she had first casually met Indranath. Overcoming her natural reserve, she had begged him to give her some of his work to do. and he had offered to put her in charge of a high school for girls, just started in Calcutta. He had said:

'The only promise I ask of you is never to become entangled in any social relationship. You are not for society, but for your country alone!'

'I promise,' she had answered simply.

'You gave us the injunction exclusively to devote ourselves to our duties. Is that possible in all circumstances?' she now asked.

'It mayn't be possible for every one. But you're not the girl to sink your pledge by overloading it with a love affair.'

'But-, '

'There's no "But". You simply can't be let off.'

'And yet you know I do practically no work for you.'

'I never expected you would. It's not work I want of you. Of course, it is hardly possible for you yourself to know of the glory that lights up the hearts of the boys at the touch of your fingers when you anoint their foreheads with the red sandal-paste of initiation.

How can the dry rewards I have to offer evoke the same quality of work? Where sex works I put woman on a pedestal.'

'I'll not keep anything from you. This love of mine is day by day overshadowing my love for all else.'

'Love as much as you like. Only the incurably immature revel in calling their country "Mother". Our country is not the Mother of senile infants. She is half God and half Goddess, Her fitting worship is in the coming together of man and woman, but such union should not be enervated by imprisonment within the bars set up by society."

'Why then is poor Uma-?'

'Uma! Kalu! Are they fit to bear unscathed the scorching flame of the larger love? There's nothing for it but to pack them off to the cremation ground of matrimony. But enough of this. Did I not hear that a burglar entered your room night before last?'

'Yes, a man suddenly came in.'

'Did your *jiujutsu* training stand you in good stead?'

'Well, I sent him off with a dislocated wrist.'

'You felt no pricks of sympathy when you did that to him?'

'I might have, had I not been afraid of being assaulted. I couldn't have given the final twist if I'd seen any signs of retreat.'

'Did you recognize him?'

'No, it was too dark to see his face.'

'Had you seen it, you'd have found him to be Anadi.'

'Oh, what a shame! Our Anadi? But he's a mere boy.'

'I sent him.'

'You! What on earth for?'

'To test both you and him.'

'What a horrible thing to do!'

'I was in a room below, and set his wrist for him then and there. You plume yourself on your sympathy with suffering. I wanted to show you how out of place that is in a situation of danger. When I asked you to shoot a kid the other day, you said you couldn't. The other girl, your cousin, did it-to show off. She laughed when the kid rolled over with a broken leg, to make out that she didn't care. But her laugh was hysterical, and she had no sleep that night. Had it been a tiger coming after you, would you have hesitated to shoot to kill? It's because I can clearly visualize the tiger that I have ceased to have any use for pity or compunction. The advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, in the Gita, to fight, did not mean that he was to be cruel, but simply to be undeterred by softer sentiments in carrying out his high purpose. You see the point?'

'I do.'

'If you do, let me ask you a question. You love Atin, do you not?'

Ela made no reply.

'Well, suppose he became a source of danger to our cause, could you kill him?'

'I can say "yes" without hesitation, because I know that to be impossible.'

'But if it did become possible?'

'Whatever I may say now, can one really know oneself to the end?' 'It's with just such certainty that you'll have to know yourself.'

'I know one thing for certain. You've selected me by mistake.!'

'On the contrary, I'm certain I made no mistake.!'

'I humbly beg of you, Master, at least release Atin.'

'Who am I to release him? He remains bound by his own resolve. I know he'll never be rid of his doubts. At every step his finer feelings will be hurt. And yet his self-respect will keep him on till the end.'

A deep voice called out from outside, 'Is that you, brother?'

'Come in, Kanai, come in!' cried Indranath.

Kanai Gupta entered the room. He was a short thickset man of middle age. His forehead was bald. His face bristled with a week's growth of beard which he had been too busy to shave. It was long since his homespun *dhoti* and wrap had been washed. The chief purpose of his tea-shop was the feeding of the organization.

Ela rose to depart. Indranath turned to her, saying:

'Ela, let me tell you just one thing more before you go. I constantly speak disparagingly of you to the members of our band. I've gone to the length of warning them that some day it may become necessary to cause you to disappear without a trace! I've complained that you're making Atin break away from us, and that one break will break something else.'

'Why help to make this true,' replied Ela, 'by continually saying it? Who knows, I may be a misfit here.'

'In spite of that, I don't mistrust you, and yet I disparage you before them. Rumour has it that you have no enemy. But I've found most of your professed admirers eager to hear all I say against you.'

'They listen to you, Master, on account of their liking for this kind of talk, not because of any dislike for me.'

'Enough of this for the present,' broke in Kanai. 'Sister Ela, if I've been at the bottom of the breaking up of your tea-party, I ask your pardon. The time is near when my tea-shop itself will have to be padlocked. Perhaps it may reappear as a barber's shop two or three hundred miles away.'

As she left the room Ela paused at the door to turn and say: 'I shall remember your words, Master, and keep myself ready. Should the day come for causing me to disappear, I will silently vanish.'

'Why so disturbed, Kanai?' asked Indranath when Ela had gone.

'The other day,' said Kanai, 'some ruffianly youths were talking heroics, sitting at that table facing the street. The very tone of their voices proclaimed them to be pet calves of John Bull himself: I promptly made a report to the police, with quotations of their seditious talk.'

'You're sure you didn't misread them, Kanai?'

'They were loud in their demand for drowning the Satanic Government in torrents of blood. If they were mere fools, they were bound to get into trouble sooner or later; if they were pure knaves, no one can hurt a hair of their heads-my report will but get them promotion. Another evening, when I was counting my till, up comes a dusty fellow in tattered clothes, asking me in a whisper for twenty-five rupees for going to our centre at Dinajpur; and he actually mentioned our Uncle Mathur's name. I jumped up shouting, "How dare you, you impudent scoundrell I'll hand you over to the police this minute." Had I the time, I'd have completed the farce by dragging him to the police station. Your boys who were drinking tea in the other room were furiously indignant with me. They started to go through their pockets to raise a subscription for the fellow, but couldn't collect more than thirteen annas among them. By then he had made himself scarce.'

'I see that the smell of the mess you've been cooking has escaped through some hole in the lid, and the flies have

begun to buzz around.'

'No doubt about it. Now, brother, is the time to scatter your boys and, moreover, to provide each of them with some ostensible means of livelihood.'

'True enough, but have you made any plans?'

'Long ago. I've not only devised means, but also gathered materials. Madhab Kaviraj, the Indian physician, sells a lot of his 'Fever Destroyer Pellets'- mostly made up of quinine. I have taken over his stock and changed the label to 'Malaria-killer Tablets.' The quinine must be supplemented by plenty of verbiage. Let Pratul Sen, that glib orator, carry them about in a canvas bag in the capacity of salesman. Your medical doctor, Tarini, can proceed to make life miserable for his acquaintances by touting for subscriptions to build a temple to Sitala, goddess of smallpox. The point is, you must hide your boys under some kind of trashy work or other.'

Indranath laughed. 'Your eloquence,' he said, 'makes me want to take up some business myself, if only to get acquainted with the methods and psychology of insolvency.'

'The business you have already in hand, brother,' retorted Kanai, is making for bankruptcy, sure enough. But what's the use of discussing that now? A question has occurred to me which I should like to ask you. You admit, I suppose, that beauty like Ela's is not to be seen every day?'

'Of course I do.'

'Then how is it you're not afraid of keeping her amongst your boys?'

'My dear Kanai, you should have known me better by this time. One who fears fire cannot use fire. I can't afford to leave fire out of my work.'

'That's to say, you don't care whether the fire you play with burns up your work or not!'

'The Creator Himself plays with fire. He doesn't count on certainties. This boy, Atin, has joined us for love of Ela. He holds within him dynamite that may at any time explode disastrously. That's why I'm so curious to see how he shapes.'

'Look here, brother, we only do the sweeping and dusting in your terrible laboratory. If any of your gases should burst its bottle, it's our fate that will be torn to pieces.'

'Why, then, don't you resign and leave us?'

'Because it was some agent of yours who taught us to believe that it's the Elixir of Life you're after, and we poor fools are here because we still have expectations of tangible results. You look on the work as a gambler, we as sober businessmen. I pray you, don't end up with the practical joke of making a bonfire of our carefully kept books of account. Every pice entered there, I tell you, means a drop of our heart's blood.'

'It's not possible for me to hold on to any blind belief, Kanai. I've long given up thinking in terms of victory and defeat. As leader in a grand enterprise I'm here because it becomes me; either victory or defeat will be equally great. They tried to make me petty by closing the doors on every side. I'm determined to show them that I'm great, even if that entails disaster at every step. You can see for yourself, Kanai, how these followers have come round me at my call, recking nothing of life or death. Why? Because I know how to call. That's what I want to make clear to myself and to others, and after that, I don't care what happens. You also, Kanai, once looked very ordinary on the outside, but I've brought out your extraordinary self. I've put the force of fire in you-that's what my laboratory is for. What more can you want? On a historical view, the epic may seem to end in a vast burial ground of defeat. Still it would be an epic. For the curtailed manhood of this slave-ridden country, isn't it the greatest of opportunities to be able to die the death of a hero?'

'I don't know, brother, how you led me, a plain, unimaginative, practical man, into the thick of this madhouse dance of yours. It's a mystery to me.'

'This power I have over all of you, because I never came to you as a beggar. I didn't ask you to come in under any delusion, nor lure you by any prospect of gain. I called on you to join my forlorn hope, not to show any particular results, but to prove your valour. My temperament is impersonal, so that I can submit cheerfully to the inevitable. And of whom am I to beg and pray that India may be spared its fate while it continues to worship with sandal-paste and vermilion the very germs of its own ruination? Mine is the dispassionate scientific attitude which tells me that if the reasons for decay are left uncured, death must ensue. Yet even in the face of all the signs of impending death, I will not allow dejection to enter my soul.'

'But what about the rest of us?

'Are the rest of you so many children? If your ship has split her bottom in mid-ocean, do you suppose you can save her by wailing and supplication?'

'What's to happen to us if we can't?'

''But was it not you yourselves who, knowing her condition, set full sail into the storm, without a tremor in your hearts? With the few of you who will stay on with me to the last, I'll count sinking a victory. Doesn't the Gita tell us our concern is with the doing of our duty, not with the results?'

'Are you so impersonal that you never feel anger?'

'Anger against whom?'

'Against the British.'

'I've travelled all over the continent of Europe, and also known the people of England. I feel that the Britishers are the greatest of Westerners. I don't say they never commit atrocities under the influence of greed or lust for power, but they cannot do so whole- heartedly. They are ashamed when

they do it. Their worst fear is that they'll have to explain their conduct to their great men at home. So they try to delude themselves, as well as their masters. That's why I can't raise my anger against them to the pitch that will generate steam.'

'You are a strange man!'

'They had the power completely to crush out our manhood, but their better nature did not allow them to do it. For that I cannot but admire their manhood. No doubt that manhood is deteriorating by the continued exercise of irresponsible power all over their empire, and in such deterioration are being sown the seeds of their own downfall.!'

'If you don't hate your opponents as enemies, I can't understand how you can raise your hand to smite them.!

'Just as I lift my pickaxe to hit a stone that blocks my way without getting into a passion over it. It's not the question whether the British are good or bad. Their rule is one of foreign exploitation, killing our very souls within us. I only show human intelligence by trying to get rid of this unnatural situation.'

'And yet you've no hope of certain success.'

'But need I, therefore, lower myself, even if before me there is nothing certain save death? Rather should the prospect of defeat impel us at least to assert our manhood. To my mind that is our first and last duty.'

Chapter Two

ELA was sitting in a lounge chair by the window, a cushion supporting her back, one knee over the other, busy writing. She had on a purple *sari* of homespun, tolerated as a useful working garment for domestic use. On her wrists were bangles of red-lacquered conchshell, round her neck a chain of gold. Her body, with its ivory sheen, was taut and trim in its shapeliness. She looked very young indeed, but her expression was one of grave maturity. Along one of the walls there was a narrow iron cot, with a green homespun counterpane over the bed. The floor was covered with a coarse cotton carpet. On a small table near her chair were an inkstand and a small brass bowl with a sprig of gardenia.

Darkness came on, and she was on the point of rising to light the lamp, when the curtain in the doorway was violently thrust aside, with a shout of 'Elie!' and Atin burst into the room like a gust of wind.

Startled into sudden gladness, Ela chided him: 'Oh, you barbarian! How dare you come in so?'

Atin dropped down at Ela's feet as he replied, 'Life is too short, and etiquette too long.'

'I'm not yet really dressed.'

'So much the better. That makes you fit in with my state. Once I was a gentleman, immaculately attired. It was you who stripped me of my trimmings. How do you like my present dress?'

'I can't find any word for it. Is that zig-zag pattern down the front of your tunic an advertisement of your own needlework?'

'No. I didn't dare give this tunic to a tailor, for he, at least, can't have lost all self-respect.'

'Why didn't you give it to me?'

'Aren't you busy enough repairing the new age, not to be burdened with a tunic besides?'

'What makes you cleave to this particular garment?

'Why does a man cleave to his wife? Because it's the only one he has'

'Whatever do you mean, Ontu! Have you only this one tunic left?'

'Well, in my previous style of living, I used to have tunics large in number and varied in pattern. Then came the flood in our country. Do you remember your speech? You said: "In this tear-flooded day of disaster when so many of our countrywomen lack even a single piece of cloth to cover their shame, the shame is theirs who keep for themselves clothes in excess of their needs."I hadn't then the courage to laugh openly. I merely smiled to myself, for I knew that in your wardrobe you had clothes far beyond your actual needs. But, of course, if a girl has fifty dresses of fifty hues,

each one is an absolute necessity. When I laid at your feet a trunk filled with all my clothes, you clapped your hands in delight.'

'What a shame, Ontu! You should have told me'

'Don't you worry. The situation is not so tragic. I kept two coloured tunics for everday use, which I wear and wash in turn. I have two others put away for emergencies.'

Ela playfully pushed away Atin's head as she said, 'What is this madness come over you these days?'

'It's been coming on ever since the day we met. The days that do not rise to the height of fulfillment are doomed to such ghostly wanderings on the horizon of the might-have-been. There lies the mirage of a bridal chamber in which our union was to be. I've come to invite you to it. Your work may be distributed.'

'Bother the work!' said Ela, letting her writing-board slide to the floor as she started to rise. 'I'll light the lamp.'

'No, don't. Light can only show reality. I want to take you along the unlighted road to the yet-unrealized. It's now almost four years since I was crossing the river at Mokameh Ghat on the ferry steamer. I was still holding on the remnants of my ancestral fortune, full of debt-made holes. Luxurious tastes still clung to me like the cloud colours of declining day. Clad in a silk tunic, a scarf of old-gold *muga* neatly folded on my shoulder, I was sitting alone in a cane chair on the first-class deck. You had cast in your lot with "the people" as a deck passenger. All of a sudden, you came up and stood right in front of me. The golden brown of your sari is still vivid in my mind. The end was drawn up over the back of your head, fixed to the coil of your hair with a pain, swelling to the breeze on either side of your face. With strained naturalness you asked me, "Why don't you wear *Khadi*?" Do you remember?'

'Very clearly.'

'I want to recall the whole of that day-you'll have to listen.'

'Only too gladly, It is the refrain of my own life. My heart wants to go back to it over and over again.

'The music of your voice thrilled me through and through. It struck me like a sudden shaft of light. Could I have become indignant at this unheard-of impertinence from a strange girl, I'd have followed the usual path of fashionable society to the end of my days. But vanity is the best part of my nature; so I jumped to the conclusion that if the girl hadn't specially liked me, she would never have come to improve me. Tell me, wasn't I right?'

'Haven't I told you often enough, you greedy boy, how I had been gazing and gazing at you from my corner of the third-class deck, regardless of whether anybody was watching me or not? That was a most wonderful experience of life-long intimacy felt at first sight. "Whence comes this strange being," asked my heart, "so much bigger than his surroundings, a lotus flower amongst water weeds?" I was at once filled with the determination to draw near to me this rare creature-not only near to me, but near to all of us.' 'It was my evil fate that made your resolve plural.' 'I had no choice, Ontu. I had already sworn to devote myself to my country, not to keep anything for myself alone. My betrothal was to my country.'

'This pledge of yours was a crime and, every day you keep it, you commit a fresh outrage against your own nature. To crush under the heels of your party a feeling which is of the purest, which comes by command of the Creator Himself, is a sin for which you'll have to take punishment.'

'There is no end of this, Ontu! It tortures me day and night. Supreme good fortune, not to be won by any striving, an unmasked gift of the gods, was vouchsafed to me, and I could not accept it. Heart linked to heart, and yet the unbearable pangs of widowhood-may fate never inflict this suffering on any other woman! I had been from my childhood spellbound within conventional barriers, but at the very first sight of you my heart said, "Let all barriers be broken". I could never have imagined such a revolution within myself. I used to be proud of my success in controlling my feelings.'That pride I have lost. Look within me and you'll see my surrender. You are the hero, I your captive.'

'I also have owned defeat at the hands of my captive, a defeat not yet come to an end. At every moment there is my struggle and my defeat'.

'When I had that first wonderful vision of you, Ontu, on the firstclass deck, I was still full of the newly-born patriotic pride in going third-class. On changing into the train you took a second-class ticket. My whole being was drawn to the same class. A trick even occurred to me. I would board your compartment at the last moment and say I was led into the mistake in my hurry. In our old poems it's the woman who always goes to keep tryst with her lover. The poets have done us this favour out of pity, knowing how impossible that is in society-ridden real life. Our unsanctioned desires go round and round in the darkness of their confinement within us, knocking their heads against the walls. Such desires women do not acknowledge except to themselves. You have made me acknowledge them to you.'

'Why have you done so?'

'I haven't been able to give you anything else.'

Atin suddenly clasped both of Ela's hands in his own, and asked bitterly: 'Why couldn't you? What prevented you from accepting me? society? caste?'

'For shame, Ontu, never think of such a thing! There was nothing outside. The obstacle was within me.'

'Does that mean that you do not love me enough?'

"Enough" has no meaning here, Ontu. Don't despise me for being weak if I can't move mountains. I had sworn not to marry. Even if I hadn't sworn it, marriage wouldn't have been possible for me.'

'Why not?'

'Don't be angry with me, Ontu! My love itself would have stood in the way. So destitute am I, I feel I have not enough to offer you.'

'Tell me more plainly.'

'I've told you so often!'

'Tell me once more. I want to finish all our telling tonight. I'll never ask again.'

A voice outside called, 'Sister, dear!'

'Is that you, Akhil? Come in,' said Ela.

A boy entered. A handsome, obstinate-looking, mischievous face; dishevelled curly hair; light-brown complexion of an infantile softness; restless eyes aglow. He wore a khaki jacket unbuttoned at the neck, and khaki shorts, their pockets bulging with all kinds of litter, including a horn-handled jack-knife.

Akhil was an orphan, a distant cousin of Ela's. As he entered, he made a shamefaced attempt to salute her formally by touching her feet.

'Aren't you going to greet your brother Atin, too?' admonished Ela.

Akhil turned his back on Atin, without reply. Atin laughed as he patted Akhil's shoulder. 'Well done!' He said. 'If you must bend your head, let it be before a single divinity.'

'Don't listen to him, Akhil,' said Ela ; 'go on with what you want to say.'

Tomorrow is the day of mother's death.'

'So it is. Do you wish to invite any one to the rites of observance?'

'No'

'Then what is it you want?'

'I want three days off from my studies.!

'What will you do with your holiday?'

'I want to snake a rabbit hutch.'

'You haven't any rabbits left, why bother about a hutch?'

Atin smiled as he interposed: 'Rabbits can be imagined. The real thing is the making of the hutch.'

'All right, Akhil, you may have three days off,' said Ela.

Without another word Akhil was out of the room at a run.

'I've been quite unable to tame him,' said Atin. There's a third party dividing us. But let that be. Now for your explanation. What made you keep me at a distance?'

'Why can't you remember one simple thing-that I am older than you?'

'Because I can't forget the simple thing that you are twenty-eight, and I am a few months over twenty-eight.'

'My twenty-eight is far more than yours. At your age all the wicks of the lamp of youth are burning brightly. You still have your window open to unrealized, unthought-of possibilities.'

'Elie, you don't understand me simply because you won't. Don't go on saying that the unrealized is yet to come in my life. It has already come-it is you. And yet it's still unrealized. Shall I have to keep my window expectantly open forever? Through its emptiness only the wail of my yearning heart goes forth, "I want you, only you!" And no reply comes.'

'Oh, ungrateful! How can you say that you've had no reply? I also want you, you, you! And there's nothing

I want more in all the world. Only, our meeting happened at a time when it could not be auspiciously carried further.'

'Why, what harm would it have done to carry it on to union?'

'My life, indeed, would have been fulfilled, but what a trifle that is! You aren't like the others, but ever so much above them. And it's because I kept my distance that I was privileged to see this wonderful greatness of yours. I'm mortally afraid even to think of swathing you round with my smallness, of bringing you down to the pettinesses which make up my little household. There may be women who would have no compunction in smothering you under the numberless details of their lives. I know of so many tragedies which such women have brought about-monarchs of the forest stunted under a tangle of clinging creepers-as if their embraces are all-sufficient.'

'Elie! Only he who receives can say what is, or is not, all-sufficient.'

'I refuse to live in a false paradise, I know you, Ontu, better than you do yourself. Pent in the narrow cage of my love, you'd soon have begun to beat your wings. The little of satisfaction I have in me to offer, you'd have by now drained to the dregs. Then you'd have found out my utter destitution. That's why I gave up all my personal claims on you and surrendered you completely at the shrine of our country. There your gifts will not lack full scope.'

Atin's eyes flashed. He got up and began to pace up and down the room. Then, standing in front of Ela, he said: 'The time has come to talk to you straight and hard. What right have you, let me ask, to deliver me up to the country,. or to any one else? Your offering to me could have been something beautiful-call it service, call it favour, as you will-and according to your mood I'd have come to you, proudly if you had allowed pride, humbly if such had been your pleasure. But you cut down your gift to paltriness. Your woman's glory you had to bestow, but that you cast aside and offered instead to place the country in my hands! That you can't do, positively cannot-no one can. The country cannot be passed from hand to hand like this.'

Ela winced at this blow to her self-assurance. 'What are you talking about?' she murmured.

'I'm saying that the realm of sweetness and light which has woman for its centre may appear small on an outward view, but, within, its depth is immeasurable. It's by no means a cage. But the place you've assigned me, calling it country-which after all is nothing but a country of your band's own make-whatever it may mean to others, it's nothing but a cage for me. My natural powers do not find full scope in it; they are becoming unhealthy and perverted. I'm ashamed of what I'm doing, but I find the way out blocked. You don't seem to realize how my wings have been clipped, my limbs shackled. I had the responsibility, as well as the capacity, to take my own true place in my country's service. You made me forget it'

'What did I do to make you forget, Ontu?'

'I'll admit a thousand times that you can make me forget all else but you; had it not been so, I'd have doubted my own manliness.'

'Why then reproach me?'

'After making me forget myself, you should have taken me into your own realm, your own world. Instead of that you merely echoed the words of your band and showed me "the one and only way!" And, going round and round in the pursuit of my official duties over that cement road of yours, the whole current of my life is being stirred into muddiness.'

'Official duties?'

'Yes, the duty of pulling at the. car of Juggernaut's. Our Supreme Counsellor decreed that our whole duty was to take hold of a thick rope and keep pulling with closed eyes. Thousands of boys caught hold of the ropes. Some were crushed under the wheels, others crippled for life.'Then came the order to turn back. The car began its return journey. But the broken bones did not become whole, and the cripples were swept out of the way on to the dust heaps. Independent thinking was knocked on the head from the very start and the boys came shutting up, ready and proud to be moulded into puppets. When they all began to dance to the same tune, at the wire-pulling of the Master, they were struck with admiration at their own performance. "Verily the dance of Sakti (Power)!"- thought they. But, whenever the Master slackens his pull, thousands of the puppet-boys fall out of the dance.'

'The boys themselves spoil it by trying to do their own steps, out of time.'

'They should have known from the first that live men cannot play the puppet for long. To ignore man's nature by trying to make him a puppet is folly. Had you respected me for my own individuality you would have drawn me not to your group, but to your heart!'

'Why, oh, why, Ontu, didn't you drive me away at the very beginning? Why did you make me guilty of doing you this injury?'

'That is what I've been trying to tell you. I desired union with you-a very simple desire, almost ungovernable desire. I found the usual way closed. I desperately entrusted my life to a crooked way. I have now come to know that it will lead me to my death. When at last I am dead to my real self, your outstretched arms will beseech me, by day and by night, to return to the equally dead emptiness of your bosom... I am talking like a fool, I know, a romantic fool. As if the getting of a shadow, without body or substance, is getting at all. As if your agony at our separation then, could pay the price of our frustrated union to-day!'

'The intoxication of words has got hold of you, now, Ontu!'

'Got hold of me now? It has always possessed me. Such a wordridden creature has this Atin of yours always been! But I've lost all hope that you'll ever know him for what he really is-now that you've gone and made him one of the pawns in the game started by your precious band.'

Ela slipped down from her chair and laid her head on Atin's feet. Atin drew her up beside him as he continued: 'With words have I decorated this slim, dainty body of yours in my own mind-my joy and my sorrow in one-what have I not called you! I'm surrounded by an invisible atmosphere, an atmosphere of words-they come down around me from the Elysium of literature to save me from the crowd. Ever aloof am I, and that your Master knows. Why, then, does he trust me, I wonder!'

'He trusts you for that very reason.'To mingle with the crowd one has to come down to the crowd. But come down you cannot. That's why I, too, trust you. No woman ever so trusted any man. Had you been an ordinary man, then like an ordinary woman I'd have been afraid of you. But there's no place for fear in your company.'

'A curse upon such fearlessness! You can't know a man unless you fear him. You claim desperate courage for winning the country, why not for winning your glorious self? Oh; why did I not desperately snatch you away long ago, while there was yet time! Good breeding But love is barbarous. Its barbarity is for cutting a way through mountainous obstacles. It's a wild torrent, not a tame water-pipe-'

Ela suddenly rose to her feet. 'Come, Atin,' said she, 'let's go down to the other room.'

'Afraid!' cried Atin, as he also stood up. 'So at last you're afraid! Then the victory is mine. In the depths of me I'm a man, an impetutous barbarian. Had I not lost my opportunity. I'd have crushed you in my embrace, making your ribs ache: I'd not have given you the time to think-not left the breath in you to sob out a protest; I'd have pitilessly dragged you along the road to my own fastness! But the road on which I've actually arrived is narrow as a razor's edge, with no rooom for two, side by side-'

'Oh, my barbarian! You won't have to snatch me-take me, take me!' cried Ela. With outstretched arms she flung herself on his breast and raised her face to his. As suddenly

she recoiled. Through the window her glance fell on the street below. 'Oh, look!' she whispered with a shudder. 'He's there!'

'Who? Where?' asked Atin.

'There, at the corner. It's Batu. He's sure to be coming here. My whole being shrinks in disgust when I come across this odious creature-there's something so fleshy, so slimy about him. The look in his eyes insults me from a distance.'

'Don't worry about him, Ela, Why not dismiss him from your thoughts altogether?'

'I can't, I'm so afraid of him. And it's not only for myself-my fears are more for you, for I know that his jealosy has its snake's hood raised to strike.'

'These beasts have no courage. Ela. Only a bad smell. At bottom the fellow's afraid of me; not for anything he thinks I may do to him, but because he feels I belong to a different species.'

'Ontu, I have imagined all kinds of evil and suffering that may come upon me, and am prepared for everything except falling, by some trick of fate, into this man's clutches. I'd die any death first.' Ela clung to Atin's arm, as though need for rescue was imminent. 'Listen! Here he is, coming right up.'

Atin went out on the landing, saying loudly: 'Not here, Batu. Let's go down to the sitting room. Sister Ela's dressing now.'

'I want just one word with her.'

'She told me she doesn't want any one to come to her room till she's ready.'

'Except you-?'

'Except me.'

Batu smiled a derisive smile. 'We old boys,' said he, 'have all this time been kept doing the ordinary chapters of grammar. You, the newcomer, get on at one jump to Poetic License! Exceptions are slippery things; their vogue, let me warn you, dosen't last long.' With this, Batu quickly ran downstairs.

A moment later Akhil came up, swinging a small saw in one hand and holding out the other. 'A letter,' he said. 'I was told to put it in your own hands.'

'Who told you?'

'I don't know him.' The letter delivered, Akhil was off.

Opening the envelope, Atin saw a note written on red paper a danger signal. It was in code. He deciphered it to read:' Don't stay any longer in Ela's house. Come away at once, without a word to her'.

Atin in self-respect could not disregard the command of one whose authority he had acknowledged. According to rule he tore the note into little pieces. For a moment he lingered;then he was out of the house with rapid strides, and with a bound boarded a passing tram-car.

Chapter Three

A VERDANT mass of trees, creepers and undergrowth, the light green, dark green, yellow green and brown green of their foliage jostling one another; in their shade a pool of water, choked with rotting leaves; along its edge a winding village lane, deeply rutted by cart wheels. The lane is fringed with cactus, yam and wild flowering shrubs, with occasional palisades of live seora stakes. Through gaps, here and there, glimpses of fields are to be seen, the young rice shoots just showing through the water held by mud embankments. Here, at some little distance beyond, overgrown by jungle, is a long-deserted hundred-and-fifty-year-old house, popularly believed to have come under a curse, and to be haunted by the ghost of some matricide. No living claimant has since ventured to dispute its ownership with this bodiless possessor. Our scene is the puja dalan the room set apart for family worship and religious ceremonies-of this tumbledown house.

Into this secluded retreat of Atin's there entered, towards the close of the day, old Kanai Gupta. Atin .was startled at the sight of him, for Kanai was not supposed even to be aware of his whereabouts. 'You here,' he stammered.

'I've come a-spying,' returned Kanai. 'Please explain the joke,' said Atin, mystified. 'There's no joke. When my tea-shop fell under Saturn's baleful influence, I, your humble purveyor, had to fare forth. But the baleful eyes of the authorities did not cease to follow me wherever I went As a last resort, I had to enter my name in their Spy Register. Those of us with no way left but to the cremation ground, find in this line a grand trunk road from one end of the country to the other.'

'So, instead of making tea, you're making news.'

'This profession can't be carried on with made-up news. You have to supply the real article. But I tighten the knot only when the prey is already netted. After they got ninety-nine per cent of information about your Haren, I supplied the superfluous remainder. He's now reposing in the Government Rest House at Jalpaiguri.'

'My turn this time, I suppose?'

'Very near it. Batu has advanced it most of the way. The little that remains in my hands may get you some respite. You remember how you lost your diary in your old quarters?'

'Remember? I should think I do!'

'It was sure to fall into the hands of the police some day, so I had to steal it.'

'So it was you!'

'Yes, fortune favours him whose cause is just. You were writing in it one day, as I came in. On some pretext I managed to get you away for five minutes. That was enough for me.'

'You read the whole of it!' cried Atin, with a gesture of despair.

'Certainly I did. It took me upto one o'clock in -the morning. I must admit I didn't know before what force and charm there is in the Bengali language. Secrets there were, to be sure, but they didn't touch the British Government.'

'Was it right of you-?'

'I can't tell you how right it was! You have the literary gift, and, though you gave no names or details, your disillusionment and contempt came out in letters of fire. Had it come from the pen of any government favour-seeker he would straightway have attained the heaven of advancement. Had not Batu been after you, this document might have averted the evil eye of the authorities. I honestly feel that brother Indranath has deprived the country by entangling you in his band.'

'Does the band know of your latest profession?'

'Not one of them.'

'Not even the Master?'

'He's clever, and may have some inkling of it. But neither has he asked me, nor have I told him.'

'What made you tell me then?'

'That's the strange part of it. Those who have to make their livelihood out of mistrust would get choked if they couldn't get some one at least to confide in. I am not a fool, neither am I sentimental, so I don't keep a diary. Had I done so, nothing would have relieved my feelings like placing it in your hands.'

'Don't you confide in the Master?'

'To him one can make reports, but not open one's heart. I may be Indranath's chief adviser, but I don't know all about what he's doing. There are things I don't even dare guess at. It's my belief that when Indranath wishes to get rid of any one of his own traitors he gets him buried in the police refuse heap. That may be a betrayal, but not a crime. I warn you, if you ever come to find the handcuffs on you, that'll either be my doing or his-anyway I hope you'll take it in good part! The news of your transfer here was first hinted to the whispering department of Law and Order by Batu. So I had to go one better by furnishing them with a photograph of the place.'

'Now to business. All I can get you is twenty-four hours' time to clear out. If after that you're still here, I myself will have to put you on the road to the police station. I've written out for you in full how to get to your next destination. You know the code. Commit the directions to memory and tear up the paper. Here's a sketch map of the place. On this side of the road is the room you'll live in-it's in one comer of the schoolhouse. On the opposite side of the road is the police station. The Head Constable in charge is some sort of grandnephew of mine. His name is Raghubir. I call him Raghab, the killer fish. You've been appointed a teacher of Bengali. This Raghab will come over, now and then, and rummage your things; he may also give you a poke or two with his baton. Take it all as God's own mercy. His people have lived for generations in the upper provinces, and this fellow lets his contempt for the Bengal-born find unrestrained expression in his adopted language. Don't you make the faintest attempt to talk back, and for the life of you don't try to return home. I'm leaving my bicycle outside. When. you hear the signal, jump on it in the twinkling of an eye. Now, my child, a last embrace.'

They embraced, and Kanai vanished.

Atin sat awhile in silent thought, looking with inwards. The last act of his life's drama had been brought on out of its time; the curtain would soon be rung down, the lights put out. His start had been made in the clear light of dawn, since when he had travelled very far. The vision of a woman's beauty that had been revealed to him at the bend of the road by the goddess of his fortunes, was not of this world. It was the inspiration of history working within him that had made Atin, like Dante, throw himself into the vortex of political revolt. But where was the truth, the valour, the glory in it? From the mire of masked robberies and murder into which the movement had progressively been drawn, no pillar of light would ever rise to illumine the pages of history. With his Godgiven gifts destroyed, Atin could now see no prospect of fruition before him, but rather the certain vanquishment of his self. Defeat has its value, but not the defeat of soul that brings in its train ghastly doings underground; unmeaning, unending...

The daylight waned. The cicadas shrilled in the courtyard. The wheels of a distant cart creaked their agony.

Suddenly into his room came Ela, with rapid steps, in a blind hurry, like that of a suicide taking the final plunge. As Atin jumped up, she threw herself on his breast, sobbing, 'Ontu, Ontu, I couldn't keep away any longer!'

Atin gently disengaged her arms and, placing her before him, silently gazed at her tearful face, as he said, 'What's this you've done, Elie?'

'I don't know-I didn't know what 1 was doing.'

'But how did you come to know where I am?'

'You didn't tell me,' said Ela, with a world of reproach in her voice.

'He who has told you is no friend of yours.'

'Of that I've no doubt either; but to live in the emptiness of not knowing the way to you became so unbearable, I cared not whether I got it from friend or foe. What ages have passed since I saw you last!'

'Elie, you are wonderful!'

'It's you who are wonderful, Ontu. How easily could you obey the mandate to cease to see me!'

'That was my ingrained pride. Tremendous longing crushed me in its coils day and night, but I wouldn't give in. They had put me down as sentimental; they were so certain

that in the day of trial I'd be found to be made of clay! It was beyond them to understand that in my sentiments lay my strength.'

'The Master understands, Ontu.'

'But Elie, you've broken the rules by coming here.'

'I know, Ontu. I admit my weakness. Yet it wasn't for my own need alone, but for yours, too. Every day my heart told me you were calling me. Not to respond to your call would have suffocated me.'Tell me, Ontu, aren't you glad that I came?'

'So glad am I that I'm ready to risk punishment for it'

Ela took a turn round the room. A blanket spread on the floor, with a mat over it, served as a bed. A canvas bag filled with books had taken the place of a pillow. A packing case did duty as a writing desk. In a corner was a water jar with an earthen pot for a lid. A tattered basket contained a bunch of bananas and an enamel-ware goblet with the enamel chipped off in places, which could be used as a tea-cup on the rare occasions when any tea was to be had. At the other end of the room was a huge wooden chest with a clay image of the elephant-headed Ganesha resting on it. A musty smell of dampness pervaded the stagnant atmosphere of the whole room.

She found it quite impossible to adjust her mind to the idea of Atin doomed to these squalid, unclean surroundings.

Atin laughed outright. 'The sight of my wealth,' said he, 'seems to amaze you. We have to keep ourselves thoroughly mobile. Neither man nor thing must be there to clog our steps when the time comes for us to run. A little way off there are the quarters of the jute mill operatives. They call the Master Babu. I read for them the letters they get, put the address on the letters they write, and see to it that their mutual accounts of debts and dues are in order. I get frequent gifts of milk and fruit and vegetables.'

'Whose is that big box on the other side, Ontu?' 'One is more conspicuous in a place like this, if alone; so I have let in a Marwari tradesman who was swept into the streets by the goddess of misfortune. He is a discharged insolvent for the third time. I'm inclined to think that becoming bankrupt is his chief business. He looks on this dilapidated *dalan* as a training academy for his nephew. After breakfasting on roasted barley meal, they turn up here. They dye cheap cloths for the village women, and out of the proceeds pay the interest on the capital they've borrowed, and a part of the principal as well. Those big pots you see over there are not used by us for cooking feasts, but are for boiling the dyestuff. The dyed cloth is kept in that box, which also contains trinkets suitable for the wives of the mill hands-glass bangles, brass bangles, combs and hand mirrors. They go out at three o'clock in the afternoon and return the next morning. Meanwhile I and the ghost act as custodians.'

'How long are you to be here?'

Twenty-four hours, I expect.'

'What's your next address?'

'It's forbidden to tell.'

Ela had taken out the books from the canvas bag. They were mostly poetry in English and Bengali.

'I've been carrying these about all this time,' said Atin, 'so that I may not altogether forget my caste. My original abode was in the dream-land of their making; if you turn over their pages you'll find its highways and byways marked in pencil. And where am I to-day? Look around you.'

Ela sank to the ground and clasped Atin's feet. 'Forgive me, Ontu, forgive me,' she wailed.

'What have I to forgive you for, Elie? If there be a God, and if He be all-merciful, may He forgive me!'

'I brought you to this pass when I didn't know you for what you are.'

'My own folly brought me to the place which is not mine,' said Atin with a bitter laugh. 'Why grudge me even that much credit? I'm not in the mood to put up with your trying to make me out a minor needing your guardianship. Come down, rather, from your height; look me in the face and say, "Come, my lover, come and sit close by me, on the half of my Sari's end spread for you."'

'Maybe I would have said that, but why this mad mood of yours?'

'What can I do but flare up when you dare suggest that your lotus-stem arms dragged me forth on this road?'

'Why be angry with me for telling the truth?' 'You call that the truth! The urge within me flung me out-you were only the passive object.'

'For heaven's sake, Ontu, stop this wild talk. I'll never be able to forgive myself for drawing you away from your own way of living, uprooting you from your normal life. Why were you led to make your mistake, merely because I had made mine? Why did you risk the degradation of ceasing to earn your own living?'

'Had I not accepted suffering, you'd have turned away from me and never understood how much I loved you. Now don't try to twist this to mean love of country.'

'Had our country nothing to do with it, Ontu?' 'What I was doing for the country I was doing for you.The opportunity came to me to brave death for your sake. This you forget, and reserve all your remorse for my lost livelihood-you incorrigible housewife!'

'Yes, we women cannot bear the idea of want. Grant me at least one prayer. I inherited my father's house and I have some money put by. I beseech you to take some of it from me. I know you are in great need.'

'Had I been so hard put to it, all kinds of ways were open to me, from writing coaching manuals to clearing

dustbins.'

'I admit, Ontu, that my resources should have been spent in the service of my country. But the road to earning is blocked for us women; that's why our necessity to save is so imperative. The little store that we lay up is not only for the needs of our living, but of our love as well. Oh, could I but persuade you that whatever I have is for you!'

'On that point you'll never persuade me. The only gift I could unhesitatingly ask of you, you held back behind the bars of your pledge.'

'One day you were busy casting up the accounts of the Narayanee School. I came and dropped into a seat by your side, sorely wounded at heart, as a kite, buffeted by storm, drops to the dust. I came with a mind already defeated. You didn't even look at me. I kept my longing eyes on you all the time, hoping against hope that a touch of those flowerlike fingers might be vouchsafed to heal my pangs of body and mind. But no sympathy stirred within you. Miser, even so little you were unable to give!'

Ela's eyes filled. 'You're quite impossible, Ontu,' she interrupted. 'Why need you have waited for my response? Why didn't you snatch away my account book? Couldn't you understand how your diffidence made me diffident?'

She drew Atin's head to her breast and laid her own on his, passing her fingers lightly through his hair.

After a while Atin raised his head and sat upright. Taking Ela's hand in his, he said: 'When we were on the ferry steamer from Mokameh Ghat, I hadn't understood that Grandmother Fate had merely given a mischievous tweak to my ears as she passed me by. My mind has ever since been building castles in the sky of my memory...

'My servant had taken off my heavy luggage, stowed on the lower deck, to the railway station. A leather suitcase remained in my cabin. I was looking about for a coolie to carry it. Demurely you came up to me. "Waiting for a coolie?" you asked, without the suspicion of a smile. "Why? Let me carry your suitcase." And before I could make the wild protest I felt, you had caught it up. Then, with a show of compunction for my awkward plight, you added: "If you're feeling embarrassed, I'll tell you what you can do. There's my trunk on the other deck. You may take that. Then we'll cancel each other's debt."There was nothing else to do. It was seven times heavier than mine! I kept shifting it from one hand to the other as I staggered all the way to the railway station, till I managed to put it into a third-class compartment. There was I, wet through with perspiration, my breath coming in gasps; and you with mischievous laughter in your eyes. Pity might have been lurking somewhere in your composition, but you wouldn't show it; for you had taken on yourself the burden of making a man of me!'

'Oh, stop, please stop! I feel so ashamed to think of what I then was, how silly, how ridiculous. I wonder you could tolerate me.'

'You came to me that day in a halo of illusion. The sun was setting. The lightly clouded sky was filled with the rare diffused radiance that our womenfolk call the "bride-viewing light". The smooth-flowing Ganges glowed back like a mirror. And your slim, supple figure remains forever painted in my mind against that radiant background. What happened after? I heard your call. But where did it lead me? So far, so very far away from you. You do not even know how far.'

'Why did you not tell me, Ontu?'

'There are injunctions I have to obey. Not only that. What would be the good of telling you all? The light is getting dim, Elie. Come nearer to me. These truant, wayward locks of yours, constantly straying over your eyes, which you keep putting into place with your deft fingers; this black-bordered tussar sari, hanging loosely over your shoulder, with its edge over the back of your head, pinned to your hair; the trace of fatigue in your eyes, the touch of entreaty on your lips; the waning light that sinks into the vagueness of its ending. All this that I see is truth, miraculous truth.'

'What is all this you're saying, Ontu?'

'It's mostly imagination. It brings back to me how you once wanted me to go and live amongst the labouring folk. It must have been your idea to level to the dust my pride of birth. Your great enterprise amused me. I entered into the spirit of the democratic picnic. I wandered about amongst the carters, from one buffalo shed to another. I called some of them brother, others uncle. But they could see as well as I that these affectionate relations wouldn't stand wear. There are, no doubt, greatsouled men in whose voice such words strike the right note, whatever be the instrument on which they play. But our attempts at imitation sound miserably out of tune.'

'But, Ontu, I'm not yet able to understand why, when you discovered your mistake, you didn't turn back from the road which wasn't yours.'

'Before I took this road there was much I wasn't aware of, much I didn't even suspect. Then I came to know the boys, one after another - boys the dust of whose feet I'd have taken, had not they been so much younger than I! What have they not seen since, what have they not suffered, what insults they have not borne-the whole story will never see the light of day. It was the torment of all this that drove me mad. Many times have I vowed to myself: I will not be vanquished by fear or torment; I will die striking my head against the heartless stone wall, but, snapping my fingers at it, I will ignore the wall.'

'Have you then changed your mind now?' 'Listen. One who openly fights a more powerful foe, even if his be a hopeless struggle, is in the same class as his opponent; his honour remains unsullied. I had imagined that at least that honour would be mine. But, as the days went by, I saw with my own eyes how even the most high-minded of the boys began to lose their manhood. What greater loss could there be? I knew for certain they'd only laugh at me, perhaps get angry with me, and yet I had to tell them that the worst of

all defeats was to come down to the wrongdoer's level. It was for us, before we were knocked out, before we met our death, to prove ourselves the greater, as men-why else this play of pitting ourselves against immeasurably superior forces? Some of them understood me, but how few!'

'Why, even then, didn't you leave them?' 'How could I? The net of punishment was then closing round them. Every bit of their career had passed before my eyes. I had felt with them each heart-rending experience. So, however revolted my feelings, however strong my hate of the movement, I simply could not desert them in the moment of their greatest danger. One thing had become clear to me. To oppose overwhelming strength by brute force can but brutalize in the end one's very soul.'

'I must confess, Ontu, that lately the terrible tragedy of it has been revealed to me also. I had entered the lists at the call of glory, but the shame of it is enveloping me more and more. Tell me, what can we do now?'

'Every man and woman is called upon to fight the great fight in the field of righteousness, where to die is to earn the highest heaven. But for us, the way to that battlefield is closed. We must now reap to the end the fruits of our past *karma,* our past deeds.'

'I understand you, Ontu, and yet the cynical way in which you talk of our patriotic movement hurts me deeply.'

'I'll confess to you for the first time to-day: what you call a patriot, that I am not. The patriotism of those who have no faith in that which is above patriotism is like a crocodile's back used as a ferry to cross the river. Meanness, unfaithfulness, mutual mistrust, secret machination, plotting for leadership- sooner or later these drag them into the mud at the bottom.' That the life of the county can be saved by killing its soul, is the monstrously false doctrine that nationalists all over the world are bellowing forth stridently. My heart groans to give it effective contradiction. I had it in me, perhaps, to express it in words burning with truth, words that would have remained great through the ages. But that has been denied me in this life. That is why the pain at my heart sometimes becomes so cruel,'

'Turn back yet, Ontu, turn back,' cried Ela, with a deep sigh.'

'The way is closed.'

'But why?'

'Even if I'm on the wrong road, it has its own responsibilities to the bitter end.'

Ela put her arms round Atin's neck as she implored him: 'Turn back, Ontu. You have broken down the foundation of my faith, my refuge all these years. Now that I'm adrift I have nothing but wreckage to cling to. Rescue me and take me back with you.'

'There's no way out now. The arrow can miss the mark, but it cannot return to the quiver.'

'I offer you my hand in marriage, Ontu, as the princesses of old used to do. Take me. There's no time to lose. Let us pledge our troth by exchange of vows. Then take me as helpmate along your path.'

'Had it been a path of danger, I'd have taken you. But how can troth be pledged when Truth itself has been wrecked? But no more of this. Something true may still be left, even in this day of shipwreck. That I would hear from your lips.'

'What am I to tell you?'

'Tell me that you love me.'

'I tell you, I do love you'

'Tell me that you'll remember I loved you, even when I have ceased to live.

Ela's face was wet with tears. After a long pause she said: 'Take something at least from me, Ontu. Take this necklace.'

'Never! I'll not take alms of you.'

'Then take me as your companion on your own terms!'

'Don't tempt me, Ela. My way is not yours.'

'Neither is it yours, then. Turn back.'

'The way is not mine-it's I who belong to the way. No one calls the noose round his neck an ornament.!'

'Know for certain, Ontu, if you cease to live, so will 1. I've no one else but you. If you doubt that now, it's my own hope that somewhere, somehow, after our death, such doubt will be removed forever.'

With a sudden start Atin sprang to his feet. The thin, keen sound of a whistle, like the whine of an arrow in flight, came from the distance.

'I'm off,' he said. 'Stay-' pleaded Ela, as she held him in her arms.

'No.'

'Where are you going?'

'I don't know.'

Ela slipped to the ground, still clasping him. 'I am your slave,' she moaned, 'yours to command. For mercy's sake, don't leave me behind.'

Atin hesitated, but only for a moment. A second blast on the whistle was heard.

'Let me go!' he shouted.'Then, tearing himself free, he disappeared.

The evening darkness had deepened. Ela lay prone on the floor, her eyes tearless, her very heart dried up, how long she knew not. A flash of light brought her to herself. A grave voice sounded in her ears. 'Ela!'

She sat up, startled. There was Indranath, electric torch in hand. She jumped up. 'Bring Atin back to me!' she cried.

'Why are you here?' said Indranath curtly.

'I knew I was facing danger when 1 came.' 'It's not your danger that matters,' Indranath sternly rebuked her. 'Who told you of this place?' `Batu.'

'And you couldn't see why he told you?' 'I was unfit to understand anything.' 'Had it been wise to kill you, I'd have done so here and now. Go back to your rooms at once!

There's a taxi on the road outside.'

Chapter Four

YOU here again, Akhil, escaped from the boarding-house as usual! It's bad of you. How often have I told you not to be coming over here these days. You'll get into some terrible trouble if you go on like this'

Akhil made no answer, but, dropping his voice, he said: 'Just now a man with a bushy beard climbed over the back wall into the garden. So I locked your door as I came in. Listen-you'll hear footsteps.' With this he pulled open the biggest blade of his clasp knife and stood on guard.

'Put away that knife, O you hero! Here, give it to me,' said Ela, and she took the knife from him.

'There's nothing to be afraid of, Akhil, came a voice from the landing. It's I, Atin.'

Ela turned pale as she cried, 'Open the door!'

'Where's the bearded man?' asked Akhil, as he let Atin in.

'The beard's somewhere in the garden, the man's here,' replied Atin. 'Run away, Akhil, and see if you can find that beard.'

As Akhil left the room, Ela stood stiff for a moment, as if turned to stone. Then she cried: 'What have you done to yourself, Ontu? How awful you look!'

'Not exactly bewitching?'

'Then it's true! that you've been seriously ill.'

'Doctors differ, so they needn't be believed.'

'You couldn't have had any dinner, either.'

'That can wait. Let's not waste our time.'

'Oh, what made you come here, Ontu?' Ela burst out, clasping Atin's hand in dismay. 'Don't you know they're after you?'

'I don't want to disappoint them.' 'Why, Ontu, do you court certain danger like this? What is to be done now?'

'Why I've come, you shall know just before I leave. Meanwhile that's the one thing I want to forget. First let me go downstairs and lock the doors.'

Atin came back presently and said: 'It's all right. I've taken out the electric bulbs from the lamp sockets below Now let's go up to the terrace.'

'They went up the winding stairs together to the roof terrace. Closing the door after him, Atin sat on the floor with his back against it. Ela sat beside him.

'Try to feel natural, Elie,' said Atin, 'as if nothing has happened, as if we're still in the chapter before the great war begins. Why, your hands are ice-cold, they're actually trembling! Let me warm them.' He took her hands in his own and pressed them to his heart. The faint sound of

wedding music came to them from some distant house.

'Are you still afraid, Elie?'

'Afraid of what?'

'Oh, of everything, of every moment.'

'I'm afraid for you, Ontu-of nothing else.'

'Try to think, Elie,' he went on, keeping her hands in his, 'that we're here on such a night as this, fifty or a hundred years hence. The present rings us round too narrowly. What we desire so passionately is ticketed with a high price by the tricky pen of the present. What we mourn so inconsolably is labelled "Eternal Sorrow" with vanishing ink. All lies! Life, the forger, imitates the writing of eternity ; death comes and makes away with the false document, smiling-not a cruel nor a mocking smile, but a smile benign as Shiva's with all the beauty of the great peace of dawn after a nightmare of illusion. Have you, Elie, in the stillness of the night ever felt the freedom of the depths that is given by death, with its eternal forgiveness?'

'I haven't the power, like you, of seeing things in their bigness. And yet, when my heart is tortured with anxiety for all of you, I try to feel, with conviction, that death is easy.'

'It is cowardly to look on death as a means of escape. It's the only certainty, the sea into which flow all the courses of life, in which the opposites of truth and falsity, good and bad, find their final solution. This very night, this very moment, we two are in the embrace of its immensity. You remember those four little lines of Ibsen?

'Upwards

Towards the peaks,

Towards the stars,

Towards the Last silence.'

Ela with her hands pressed in Atin's sat still in silent thought.

Atin suddenly laughed out, saying: 'There, behind us, hangs motionless the black pall of death stretching back to the infinite. In front of it the play of our life dances along to its last act. Let me bring before you one of Its earlier scenes. Three years ago you celebrated my birthday on this very terrace-you remember?'

'Very well, indeed!'

'Your devoted "boys" were all there. The feast was simple enough. Parched rice fried, boiled green peas peppered and salted, also fritters, if I remember right.The boys scrambled for these dainties and finished their to the last pea. Then of a sudden Matilal, with a flourish of his arms, started to declaim: "On this day of brother Atin's new birth into the new age-." I jumped up and clapped my hand over his mouth. "If you persist in making this speech," said I, "the days of your old birth will end here." The new birth, the new age, the gate of death-all these tags sicken me so! The members of the band have tried their best to paint me with their brush, but I"ve not been able to take their colour.'

'The folly was mine, Ontu. It was I who thought of making you one of us pawns by putting on you the same livery.'

'That's why, I suppose, you vigorously played the loving elder sister. Perhaps you thought a touch of jealousy would help in my reformation. What a delightful trayful you handed out to them-of gushing hospitality, tender inquiry and needless solicitude. I can still hear your honeyed accents, "Oh, why are you looking so flushed, Nandalal?" And before the poor bashful fellow could stammer out, for truth's sake, that nothing was the matter with him, you bustled about to minister to his imaginary headache with a wet compress. I had my own illusions then, but still I could see that only some immaculate, dream-land ideal of country prompted this display of pure, patriotic sisterliness.'

'Oh, please stop, Ontu, for goodness' sake!'

'You yourself will admit, Elie, that your pose in those days savoured of the ludicrous.'

'I'll admit it, a thousand times. It's you who washed me clean of it. Why then so cruelly remind me of all that to-day?'

'Some heartache impels me, Elie. You asked my forgiveness the other day for drawing me away from my own way of living. But what of my being drawn away from the fullness of life, and yet denied the price I was entitled to? I broke my very nature; but, convention-blinded, you couldn't even break your pledge, devoid of truth as it was-remorse for this wouldn't have been so superfluous! I know what stood in your way. You couldn't bring yourself to believe that so much as all this had happened to me.'

'True, Ontu. Even now I can't help wondering how so much power could ever have been mine.'

'How could you know? It's not your own power, but the enchantment of *Maya.* Mother Nature. So magical is the melody of your voice, it flings burning whirls of music through the firmament of my mind. And this hand, these fingers of yours, they have the golden touch, making every trifle, true or false, seem priceless. How tremendous was the attraction which impelled me to accept the insult of my fall from grace, even, as I reviled myself at every step. I have read of such a thing happening, but in the pride of my keen intellect I never thought it could happen to me. Now that the time has come to rend the net of illusion, I am telling you the truth so relentlessly.'

'Go on, then, go on with all you have to say. Have no pity on me, who have been so blind, so foolish, so heartless, unable at any time to understand you truly. The incomparable came to me offering itself with outstretched hands; unworthy was I, I could not pay its price. Unimaginable good fortune came to my door, and was turned away, unclaimed, never to return. If yet mere punishment be my due, punish me.'

'Let's not talk of punishment. I want to forgive you,

with the infinite forgiveness of death itself. That's why I'm here to-day.'

'That's why?'

'Yes, only for that'

'Wouldn't it have been less cruel not to forgive, rather than step right into this trap of fire, before my very eyes? I know too well you've no desire to live on. If that be so, give me your few remaining days, give me the right to serve you to the end. That's all I beg at your feet.'

'What good will your service do me? You would pour nectar into the broken pitcher of my life! You can't even realize the intolerable gnawing at my heart of the might-have-been. What can your service do for that? What can it avail one who has lost his truth?'

'You haven't lost your truth, Ontu. Every bit of it is there, within you, still.'

'I have lost it. Oh, I've hopelessly lost it!' 'Don't say that!'

'Did you but know what I now am, you'd shiver from head to foot.'

'Look here, Ontu, you're imagining all kinds of horrid things about yourself. What you've done without any thought of self, however wrong, it can't stain your soul.'

'I've slain my soul, the biggest sin of all. Not a single evil have I been able to uproot from our country-I've only uprooted myself. For that sin I'm condemned not to take you even when you're giving yourself. Accept your hand? With this hand! But why all this? All stains will be washed away by the waters of Lethe, on whose brink we now stand. At such a time let us talk of light things, laughingly. Let me finish the story- of my birthday party. Shall I?'

I'm afraid I can't put my mind on all that, Ontu.' 'The only things in our life worth calling to mind are just such trivialities scattered over a few lightsome days. The ponderous days deserving of oblivion are only too many. My birthday feast being over, Nirod took it into his head to recite Nabin Sen's epic. In the style favoured by the favourite actor of those days he ranted: "Why dost depart, O lord of a thousand rays! look back but once, thou ornament of day-." Good fellow that, Nirod, simple and straight, but with a merciless memory! While I was pining and fretting for the party to come to an end, they needs must ask Bhabesh for a song. He fortunately protested he couldn't even open his mouth without a harmonium to accompany him-an instrument of torture you didn't happen to possess. So the crisis passed. At last the end, thought I-but no! Apropos of nothing, Satu started an argument whether the anniversary of one's birth properly fell on the same date of the month, or the same day of the moon. I tried to stop it, but signally failed. Pungent patriotism invaded the discussion; voices were raised, friendships were threatened. I felt furious with you. My birthday was but an excuse, I felt sure, for a patriotic orgy.'

'Don't try to judge from the outside, Ontu, which was the excuse and which the real object. I may deserve punishment, but not unjust punishment. Don't you remember, that was the day Mr. Atindra became Ontu for me? Was that such a small thing? Now go on with the story of your pet-name-giving.'

'Then listen, my friend. When I was four or five years old, 1 was short in stature, of few words, with a stupid look, I'm told, in my eyes. My father's elder brother, on coming home from the upper provinces, saw me for the first time. Taking me on his knee, he facetiously remarked: "Who's responsible for giving this little pigmy the name of Atindra, Great Indra? Call him rather the opposite, Anatindra. In rhetoric, exaggeration often has the reverse effect"-your pet name of Ontu was really short and affectionate for Anatin. I came to you great For your sake I cut myself down small-
'

Atin stopped short with a start. 'Is that the sound of footsteps?' he muttered as he rose.

'It's only Akhil,' said Ela.

'Sister dear!' came his voice.

'What is it?' asked Ela as she opened the door.

'Your dinner,' announced Akhil.

Ela did no cooking in the house. Her meals came from a restaurant nearby. 'Come along, Ontu, have some food,' she said.

'Don't talk of food now. It takes man quite a long time to die for lack of it, otherwise India wouldn't now have been a land of the living. Akhil, old chap, don't be annoyed with me. Go straight down and begin by eating my share of the dinner; then finish with a run-run right away.'

Akhil ruefully departed.

The two of them sat down as before. Atin began again: To go back to that celebration. It seemed it would go on for ever. Not one of them would budge. I kept looking at my watch, hoping in vain that it might prove a hint to those time-blind youths. At last I had to say to you: "Hadn't you better go off to bed? You're only just up from your influenza." "What's the time?" then arose the question from all sides. It was half-past ten. Yawns here and there indicated the approaching dispersal. "Aren't you coming?" Batu pointedly asked me. "Let's go together." "Where to?" It appeared that he wanted us to pay a surprise visit to the sweepers' quarters, catch them at their drinking, and stop it. I felt angry all over. "What if you stop their drink?" I said roughly. "Have you anything to give them instead?" As the only result of my meaningless excitement, those who were on the point of going, stopped to join in. "Do you then mean to say-" some one began. "I don't mean anything at all!" I shouted back. Then realizing that my outburst was quite uncalled for, I dropped my voice and with a meaning look toward you out of the corner of my eyes, I begged your leave to depart. By

the time we had reached the door of your room below, my legs refused to carry me farther. A device occurred to me. I slapped my breast pocket saying, "I must have dropped my fountain pen on the terrace." "Let me fetch it for you," offered the irrepressible Batu, and he immediately ran up the stairs. After him I had to go, to find him making a great show of a search. On seeing me he said with a smile: "Will you go through all your pockets, brother Atin? It may be in one of them." I knew well enough that, to find my pen, nothing short of a voyage of discovery into my rooms would serve. So I had to come forth with, "I want a word with sister Ela." "Very well," he rejoined, nothing daunted, "I'll wait for you." "Oh, get along with you," I blurted out, having come to the end of my patience. "Don't be hanging about me like this!" "I'm going. But what means this loss of temper?" was his parting shot.'

Once more Atin stopped to listen, as some one was heard coming up. It was again Akhil who came out onto the terrace with a slip of paper. 'Here's a message for brother Atin,' he said; 'I've kept the man waiting in the street.'

Ela's heart sank within her. 'Who is it?' she whispered.

'Show him into the sitting-room,' Atin told him.

As Akhil doggedly went off, Ela asked, 'Is it Batu!

'No, it's not.'

'Why don't you tell me who it is? I'm not feeling at all easy.'

'It doesn't matter. I want to finish what I was telling you.'

'It's quite impossible for me to attend to all that now, Ontu.'

'Elie, you really must allow me to come to the end of my story. There's not much left. You came up to the terrace, after Batu had left, bringing with you a faint perfume. You had kept by a special bouquet of tuberoses, till the party was over, for you wanted to put them into my hands when we should be alone. That was the moment of Ontu's new birth, ushered in by these shy flowers. And little by little all Mr. Atindra's gravity, learning and logic were drowned in profound self-forgetfulness. For the first time, that day, you put your arms round my neck, saying, "Here's your birthday present." That was our first kiss. The last kiss is what I've now come to claim.'

Akhil came up once more and reported: 'I locked him in the sitting room. He's now started thumping on the door. He says it's very important. He'll be breaking the door at this rate.'

'It's all right, Akhil,' said Atin. 'I'll see that he's calmed down before the door gives way. You needn't mount guard over him. Leave him alone and clear out. I'll look after your sister Ela.'

Ela drew Akhil to herself and, kissing him on the forehead, entreated him: 'Akhil dear, my own little brother, you really must go away from here. Take this money. I've been keeping it tied up in a corner of my *sari* for your birthday. Now touch my feet and promise me you'll leave at once.'

'Look here, Akhil,' said Atin. 'You'll have to follow the advice I'm giving you. If anybody asks you, tell him exactly what happened. Say that at eleven o'clock tonight it was I who turned you out of this house. Now come along with me, let's make these words true.'

Ela once more drew Akhil near and said: 'Don't worry about me, Akhil darling. Your brother, Atin, is with me, there's no fear.'

When Atin, tucking Akhil's arm under his own, was marching him off, Ela, unable to contain herself, cried, 'Let me come down with you, too! 'You can't do that!' commanded Atin. Ela remained leaning over the low parapet of the terrace, trying hard to suppress the sobs rising in her breast. She somehow felt that this was her last parting with Akhil.

Atin came back. 'Akhil's gone,' he said. 'I've bolted the front and back doors.'

'And the man in the sitting-room?'

I've let him out, too. He thought that, engrossed in our talk, I'd forgotten all about his message. He was beginning to get afraid that another Arabian Nights story had been started. *Arabian* Nights is the word! It's all been a story, an absurd marvel of a story. Are you feeling afraid, Elie- aren't you afraid of me?'

'Afraid of you, Ontu? What an idea!'

'Is there anything I'm incapable of doing? I've come down to the last rung of my degradation. The other day our band robbed a helpless old widow of all she had. Our Manmatha belonged to the same village and was on friendly terms with her. It was he who told of her hoard and showed the way. She made him out through his mask, and tried to plead with him. "Manu, my son, how could you have the heart-?" They didn't let her live to say any more. For the purposes of what we call the country's need-the need for murdering our own souls'-that widow's money passed through my hands to headquarters. Part of that money helped to break my recent fast. I end my career branded as a thief-receiver and user of stolen property. Batu has got the charge laid against robber Atindra. He has made it practically certain that I'll be arrested tomorrow. Meanwhile, fear me, for I myself fear that tainted ghost of my dead self. There's no one with you to-day.'

'But you're here yourself!' 'Who'll save you from me?' 'I don't care if I'm not saved from you!' 'The word has gone forth from your own band-your beloved, patriotic brothers, whom you've anointed with sandalpaste on each Brothers' Day-that you're not fit to live any longer.'

'How am I more unworthy than they?' 'You're supposed to know too much, and liable to give out what you know

under torture.' 'Never.'

'What if the man who came just now brought this order? You know what an order means with us!'

Ela started up. 'Is this true, Ontu, is it really true?'

'We've got a piece of news.'

'What's that?'

'At the end of this very night, at dawn, the police will come for you.'

'I was certain they'd do so one of these days.'

'What made you think so?'

'I had a letter from Batu yesterday, telling me, and offering to save me.'

'How?'

'He says if I marry him, he'll stand surely for me and get me off.'

Atin's face darkened. 'And what was your reply?' he asked.

'I simply wrote the word "Monster" on it, and returned the letter."

'Well, our information is that Batu himself will lead the police here.

If he can get your consent, he'll come to terms with the tiger and benevolently offer you refuge in the crocodile's hole. After all, he has a soft heart!'

Ela seized Atin's feet, begging him: 'Kill me, Ontu kill me with your own hands. I couldn't wish for a happier end.' She got up from the floor and, throwing her arms round him, kissed him again and again as she repeated, 'Kill me, Atin, kill me now!' She tore open the front of her blouse.

Atin stood rigid as a statue.

'Don't have any qualms,' Ela continued. 'Am I not yours, wholly yours, even in death? Take me. Don't let their unclean hands touch my body, for this body belongs to you.'

'Go to bed,' commanded Atin in a hrad voice. 'I ordered you, go at once.,'

But, clasping Atin to her, Ela went on:'Ontu, my Ontu, my king, my god! I've not to this day been able to show you how much I love you. By this love I charge you-kill me, kill me!'

Atin took hold of her arm and drew her down with him to her bedroom. 'Get into bed at once,' he repeated, 'and go off to sleep.'

'I can't, sleep won't come."

'I've brought medicine that'll put you to sleep.'

'What's the use of that Ontu? Let the last bit of my consciousness be for you. Is it chloroform that you have? Throw it away. I'm not a coward. Le me die awake, in your arms. Let our last kiss be eternal. Ontu, my Ontu.'

From afar came the thin sound of a whistle.

4

The King of The Dark Chamber

4

The King of The Dark Chamber

I

A street. CITY GUARD *on duty:*

[A band of wandering mendicants enter and pass out singing]

My *beloved is ever in my heart*
That is why I see him everywhere,

He is in the pupils of my eyes
That is why I see him everywhere.

I thought l heard his voice come from beyond the sky
I tried to retrace it in vain
When I came back to the quiet of my heart
I heard it in my own songs.
Who are you who seek him like a bear from door to door!
Come to my heart and see his face in the tears of my eyes!

[Enter WAYFARERS]

1ST MAN : Ho, sir!

C.-G : What do you want?

2ND MAN : We are from a foreign land-Would you kindly tell us the way?

C.-G : Where do you want to go?

3RD MAN : To the place where those great festivities are to be held, you know.

C.-G : Any street will lead you there. Go straight ahead, and you can't possibly miss it.

[CITY GUARD goes out]

1ST MAN : Did you hear what the fool said? 'Any street will lead you there'! Where then is the sense of having so many streets?

2ND MAN : My dear friend, you need not make so much of a small point like that! A country is free to order its own affairs in its own way. As for roads in our country-well, they might as well not have been there at all: narrow and crooked lanes, a maze of ruts and tracks. Our King does not believe in open thoroughfares, not he! - he thinks that streets are just so many openings for his subjects to fly away from his kingdom.

1ST MAN : My dear Janardan, I have long noticed that this is a great defect in your character.

2ND MAN : What is?

1ST MAN : That you are always having a fling at your own country. Look here, Kaundilya, here's a man who actually believes that open highways are the salvation of a country!

3RD MAN : I know, Bhavadatta, Janardan is blessed with an intelligence which is sure to get him into trouble some day or other. If the King comes to hear of our worthy friend, he will make it pretty hard for him to find anyone to perform his funeral rites after he is dead.

I ST MAN : I somehow feel that life would grow quite burdensome in this country-one misses the joys of privacy in these streets-this jostling and brushing of shoulders with strange people day and night makes one long for a bath. And you never can tell exactly *what* class of people you may be meeting in these public roads-ugh!

3RD MAN : Why, it was Janardan himself who persuaded us to come to this precious country. We never had anyone like him in our family. You knew my father, of course: he was a great man, a pious man if ever there was one. He spent his whole life within a circle of a radius of 49 cubits drawn with a rigid adherence to the injunctions of the scriptures, and never for a single day did he cross this circle. After his death a serious difficulty arose—how to cremate him within the limits of the 49 cubits and yet outside the house? At length the priests decided that though we could not go beyond the scriptural number, the only way out of the difficulty was to reverse the figure and make it 94 cubits; only thus could we cremate him outside the house without violating the sacred books. *That* was indeed strict observance! Ours is no common country!

I ST MAN : And yet, though Janardan comes from the very same soil, he actually thinks it wise to declare that open highways are best.

[Enter THAKURDADA, with the Boys of the *Hermitage]*

DADA: Boys, we shall have to vie with the wild breeze of the south today-and we are not going to be beaten. We will sing till we have flooded all the streets with our mirth and song.

[Song]

The southern gate is unbarred. Come, my spring, come!

Swing on the swing of my heart, come, my spring, come!

Come in the lisping leaves, in the youthful surrender of flowers,

Come in the flute songs of shepherds and wistful sighs of the

woodlands!

Let your ungirded robe toss in the drunken wind!

Come, my spring, come!

[Enter a *band of* CITIZENS]

1ST CIT : After all, we can't help wishing that the king had allowed himself to be seen at least on this one day. What bad luck is ours to live in his kingdom and yet not to have seen him even once!

2ND CIT : Dada, this year every country has sent its people to our festival, but everyone asks, 'Where is your King'[7] And we do not know what to answer. That is the one great lack which cannot help making itself felt in our rejoicings.

DADA : Lack! What a word to use! the whole country is filled and crammed with the King: and you call him a 'lack'! Why, he has made everyone of us a crowned *King!*

[Sings]

We are all Kings in the kingdom of our King,

Were it not so, how could we hope to meet him in our hearts?

We do our own will, yet we do his will,

We are not bound with the chain of fear at the feet of a slave –owning King.

Were it not so, how could we hope in *our heart to meet him!*

Our King *honours each one of us, arid thus honours his own* very self.

Our littleness cannot immure us for *ever in the deceitful walls.*

Were it not so, how could we hope to meet him in our hearts!

We struggle and dig our own path, and thus reach his path in the end.

We can never be utterly lost in the dark night.

Were it not so, how could we hope to meet him in our hearts!

[GRANDFATHER and BOYS go out]

[Enter HERALDS *and* ADVANCE GUARD *of the Pretender/*

IST HERALD : Stand on one side! Get out of the way, all of you!

1ST CIT : Hullo, what a lot you think of yourself? Who are you, you're nobody! Don't give yourself airs; my good Sir! Leave us alone. Why should we stand aside, we're not street dogs.

2ND HER : Our King is coming this way.

2ND CIT : King? Which King!

1ST HER : Our King, the King of this country.

1ST CIT : What, is the fellow mad! Whoever heard of our King coming out heralded by these rowdies?

2ND HER : The King will no longer deny himself to his subjects. He is coming to attend the festivities in person.

2ND CIT : What! Is that so?

2ND HER : Look, his banner is flying over there.

2ND CIT : Hullo! Yes! You're right. There is a flag.

2ND HER : Do you see the sign of the red *Kimshuk* flower on it?

3RD CIT : Yes, yes, it is indeed the Kimshuk.' - what a bright scarlet flower it has.

1ST HER : Well! Won't you believe us now?

3RD CIT : I never said I didn't. It was that fellow Kumbha who started all this disturbance. I never said a word.

2ND HER : Who's Kumbha? Is he any kinsman of yours?

2ND CIT : Oh, dear no! he is just a cousin of our - village chiefs father - in - law and he does not even live in the same part of our village.

2ND HER : That's exactly what I thought. He quite looks the seventh cousin of somebody's father-in-law and his understanding appears also to bear the stamp of uncle-in-law -hood.

4TH CIT : Alas, my friends, blow upon blow of bitter sorrow has given my poor mind a twist. Only the other day that a King came and paraded the streets, with as many titles in front of him as the drums that made the town hideous by their din ... I rained down offerings upon him, I hung about him like a beggar-But how did it all end? When people sought grants and presents from him, somehow he was not able to discover an auspicious day in the Calendar: yet everyday was a red-letter day when it came to our paying him our dues.

2ND HER : Do you mean to say that our King's a false

King, like the one you speak of?

1ST HER : Mr. Uncle-in-Law, l believe the time has come for you to say good-bye to Aunty-in-Law.

4TH CIT : My good Sirs, forgive me! I apologize with all my heart. I am willing to move away as far as you like.

2ND HER : All right, come here and form up in line. The King will soon come now-We're on our way to prepare the way for him.

[They go Out]

2ND CIT : My dear good Kumbha, your tongue will really be the death of you one of these days.

4TH CIT : Oh, my dear Madhav, it's not my tongue! It's not my tongue! It's fate! When the false King appeared I never said a word. And now, when perhaps the real King has come, I must hunt out treason! It's fate, Madhav, it's fate!

2ND CIT : I believe in absolute obedience-it does not matter whether the King be is a real one or a false one. What do we know of Kings? We're no judges of Kings. You can only be sure of hitting your aim in the dark if you throw a lot of stones. I go on obeying; if it is a real King, well and good: if not, what harm is done?

3RD CIT : Oh, look! There comes the *King!* Ah, a King indeed! What a splendid figure, what a glorious face! Whoever saw such beautylily white, creamy-soft! What now, Kumbha? What do you think now?

2ND CIT : He looks all right enough-yes, he may be the real King for all I know.

3RD CIT : He looks as though he were designed and moulded for kingship, a figure too exquisite for the common light of day.

*[Enter SU*VARNA, *the Pretender]*

Prosperity and victory attend you, O King! We have been standing here to see your royal highness since the early morning. Forget us not, your Majesty, in your favours

[Enter *another* BAND OF MEN]

1ST MAN : The King, the King! Come quickly, the King is passing this way.

2ND MAN : Do not forget me, your royal highness! I am Viraj, the grandson of Udaya of Kushalivastu. I hurried here at the first report of your coming-I did not stop to hear what people were saying: and the loyalty in me went out towards you, and brought me here.

3RD MAN : What stuff and nonsense! I came here much earlier than you did-before cock-crow. I am Bhadrasena, your Majesty, of Vikramasthali. Deign to remember your humble servant!

KING : I am much pleased with your loyalty and devotion.

1ST Man : Your Majesty, there are many grievances which we have to lay before you; to whom could we turn our prayers all this while, when we could net see you?

KING : Your grievances will all be redressed.

(Exit.]

1ST MAN : It won't do to lag behind, lads-The King will lose sight of us if we get mixed up with the mob.

2ND MAN : Look there-just look what that fool Narottam is doing! He has actually elbowed his way through the lot of us and is now busy fanning the King with a palm leaf!

3RD CIT : Good heavens! Well, I declare, the sheer audacity of the man is enough to take one's breath away:

2ND MAN : We shall have to pitch the fellow out of that place-He's not fit to stand beside the King.

2ND CIT : Do you imagine his Majesty won't see through him? His loyalty is obviously too showy and profuse.

1ST MAN : Nonsense! That won't make any difference! Kings can't scent out hypocrites as we can! I should not be surprised if the King were to be taken in by that fool's strenuous fanning.

II

The dark chamber. Queen SUDARSHANA and SURANGAMA

SUDARSHANA: Light, light! Where is the light? Will the lamp never be lighted in this chamber?

SURANGAMA : My Queen, you can meet others in the lighted rooms; but only in this dark room can you meet your lord.

SUDARSHANA: It is so still here! still and dark as the depth of the Dead sea.

SURANGAMA : It is waiting to be filled with the music of love.

SUDARSHANA: Living in this dark room you have grown to speak darkly and strangely Surangama, I cannot understand you. No, no - I cannot live without light-I am restless in this stifling darkness. Surangama, if only you can bring a light into this room, this necklace of mine shall be yours.

SURANGAMA : It is not in my power, O Queen. How can I bring light to a place which he wishes kept dark!

SUDARSHANA : Strange devotion! And yet, is it not true

that the King punished your father?

SURANGAMA : Yes, that is true. My father used to gamble. All the young men of the country used to gather at my father's house-and they used to drink and gamble.

SUDARSHANA: And when the King sent away your father in exile, did it not make you feel bitterly oppressed?

SURANGAMA : O, it made me feel mad with rage. For I was on the road to ruin-and when that path was closed for me I seemed left without any support. .

SUDARSHANA: How then did you get this devotion towards the King who treated you thus?

SURANGAMA : How can I explain? Perhaps I could rely on him just because he was so inflexible.

SUDARSHANA: When did this change of feeling take place?

SURANGAMA : I cannot tell you-I do k now not myself. A day came when all the rebel in me knew itself beaten, and then I saw that he was as matchless in sweetness as in terror. Ah, I was saved!

SUDARSHANA: Surangama, I implore you, won't you tell me what is the King like? I have not seen him yet for a single day. He comes to me in darkness, and leaves me in this dark room again. How many people have I not asked-but they all give me vague answers-it seems to me that they all keep something back.

SURANGAMA : To tell you the truth, Queen, I hardly know what he is like. No-he is not what men call handsome.

SUDARSHANA: You say that he is not handsome?

SURANGAMA : No, my Queen, to call him beautiful would be to say far too little about him.

SUDARSHANA: All you say is like that-dark and strange. I cannot understand what you mean.

SURANGAMA : And it is because he is not beautiful that he is so wonderful.

SUDARSHANA: I do not understand you Surangama and yet I like to hear you talk thus about him. But I must see him at any cost.

SURANGAMA : Do you feel a faint breeze blowing?

SUDARSHANA: A breeze? Where?

SURANGAMA : Is there not a soft fragrance in the air?

SUDARSHANA: No.

SURANGAMA : The outer door has opened ... he is coming, he is coming, my king is coming in.

SUDARSHANA: How can you perceive when he comes?

SURANGAMA : I cannot say: I seem to hear his footsteps in my heart. Serving him in this dark chamber, I have gained this new sense-1 know and feel without seeing.

SUDARSHANA: Would that I had such sense too Surangama!

SURANGAMA : You will have it, O Queen ... this sense will waken in you one day. Your longing to have a sight of him has affected your mind. When this state of restlessness is past everything will seem quite easy.

SUDARSHANA: How is it that it is easy to you, who are a servant, and so difficult to me, who am a Queen?

SURANGAMA : It is because I am a mere servant that no difficulty baulks me ....O here he comes! ...he is standing outside, before the door. Lord! O King!

[Song outside]

Open your door. I am waiting.
The ferry that bears light from the dawn to the dark has crossed this day.
The evening star is up.
Have you gathered your flowers, braided your hair;
And donned your white robe for the night.?
Tire cattle are back in their folds and birds in their nests.
The cross paths that run to all quarters have merged into one in the dark.
Open your door I am waiting.

SURANGAMA : O King, who can keep your own doors shut against you? They are not locked or bolted-they will swing wide at the touch of your finger. Will you not even touch them? Will you not enter unless we open the doors? *(Turning to the dueen)* Then do you go, O Queen, and open the door for him: he will not enter otherwise.

SUDARSHANA: I do not see things distinctly in the dark I do not know where the door is. You know everything here-go and open the door for me.

[SURANGAMA *opens the door, bows to the* KING, *and goes out]*

Why do you not allow me to see you in the light?

KING : Do you wish to see me one among a thousand things? Why should I not be the only thing you can feel in this darkness?

SUDARSHANA: But I must, I must see you-I am longing for a sight of you.

KING : You will not be able to bear the sight of me-it will only give you pain, poignant and overpowering.

SUDARSHANA: Oh, how can you say so? I feel even in this dark how lovely and wonderful you are-why should I be afraid of you in the light? But tell me, can you see me in this darkness?

KING : Yes, I can.

SUDARSHANA: What is it that you see?

KING : I see the darkness of the infinite heavens whirled into life and being in the form of a perfect body. And in that form, what aeons of thought and striving, what yearnings of limitless skies, what countless gifts of unnumbered seasons!

SUDARSHANA: Am I so wonderful? When I hear you speak so, my heart swells with gladness and pride. But how can I believe the things you tell of me? I cannot find all these in myself!

KING : Your mirror cannot reflect them-it dwindles you, limits you. But could you see yourself in my heart, how perfect would you appear!

SUDARSHANA: O show me for one instant how to see with your eyes! Is nothing dark to you? I am afraid when I think of this darkness which is to me real and strong as death-is it nothing to you? Then how can there be any union between us in a place like this? No, no it is impossible here, where there is this barrier between us-I want to find you and see you where I see trees and animals, birds and stones and the Earth-

KING : You may try to find me-but none must point me out to you. You will have to recognize me, if you can, yourself, And, even if any one professes to show me to you how can you be sure he is right?

SUDARSHANA: I should pick you out among a million men. I could never be mistaken. -

KING : So be it. To-night, during the festival of the full moon of the spring, try to find me out from the high turret of my palace-seek me with your own eyes amongst the crowd.

SUDARSHANA: Will you be there among them?

KING : I shall show myself again and again, from every side of the crowd. Surangama!

(Enter SURANGAMA]

SURANGAMA : What is your pleasure, lord?

KING : To-night is the full moon festival of the spring.

SURANGAMA : What have I to do to-night?

KING : The pleasure gardens are in full bloom-you will join in my festivities there.

SURANGAMA : I shall do as you wish, lord.

KING : The Queen desires to see me to-night with her own eyes.

SURANGAMA : Where can you be seen O King?

KING : She would see me there in the pleasure garden.

SURANGAMA : But my lord, what can be seen in that hide-and-seek of darkness and light? There the wind is wild and restless, everything is dance and swift movement-will it not puzzle the eyes?

KING : The Queen is curious to search me out.

SURANGAMA : Her curiosity must come home baffled and in tears!

III

Before the pleasure- garden

[Enter the princes of KANCHI, AVANTI, KOSHALA, VIDARBHA *and*

KALINGA]

AVANTI : Will not the King of this place receive us?

KANCHI : What manner of governing a country is this? The King holds his festival in a forest, where even the meanest people have easy access!

KOSHALA : We, sovereign rulers of this earth, should have found a place set apart and ready for our reception.

KANCHI : If he has set apart no such place as yet, we should compel him to have one prepared for us.

KOSHALA : Such things make one doubt whether these people really have any King at all-it looks as if an unfounded rumour has led us astray.

AVANTI : It may be so with regard to King; but the existence of the Queen of this place

Sudarshana is by no means an unfounded rumour!

KOSHALA : It is only for her sake that I cared to come at all. I do not mind waiting too see one who takes such a great care to hide himself.

KANCHI : Let us make some definite plan, then.

AVANTI : A plan is an excellent thing, so long as you do not get yourself entangled in it.

KANCHI : Who are these vermin swarming this way? Here! who are you!

[Enter DADA *and the* BOYS]

DADA : We are the jolly Band of Have-Nothings.

AVANTI : That is perfectly evident. But you will please take yourself a little further away and leave us in peace.

DADA : We never suffer from want of space: we can afford to give you as wide a berth as you please. What little suffices for us is not enough to quarrel about. Is not that so, my little friends!

[They sing]

(Song)

We have nothing, indeed we have nothing at all!
We sing merrily fol de rol de roll
Some build high walls to their houses
On the bog of the sands of gold.
We stand before them and sing
fol de rol de rol.
Pickpockets hover about us
And honour us with covetous glances.
We shake out our empty pockets and sing
Fol de rol de rol.
When death, the old hag, steals to our doors
We snap our fingers in her face,
And we sing in a chorus with gay flourishes .
Foll de rol de rol.

[They go out]

KANCHI : Look over there, Koshala, who are these others coming this way? A pantomime? Somebody is out masquerading as a King.

KOSHALA : The King of this place may tolerate all this tomfoolery, but we will not.

AVANTI : It may be some rural chief,

[Enter FOOTGUARDS*]*

KANCHI : What country does your King come from?

IST SOLDIER. : He is the King of this country. He is going to preside over the festivities.

[They go out]

KOSHALA : What? The King of this country come out for the festivities!

AVANTI : Indeed! Then we shall be obliged to return having only seen him and leave the delectable Queen unseen.

KANCHI : Do you really think that fellow spoke the truth? Anybody can pass himself off as the King of this kingless country. Can you not see that the man looks like a dressed up King-much too overdressed?

AVANTI : Oh, but he looks handsome-his appearance is not without a certain attractiveness.

KANCHI : He may be pleasing to your eye, but if you look at him closely enough there can be no mistaking him. You will see how I shall expose him before you.

[Enter SUVARNA *the Pretender]*

PRETENDER : Welcome, princes, to our kingdom! I trust that your reception has been all that you desired?

KING *[with feigned courtesy].* Yes, indeed: nothing was lacking in the reception.

KANCHI : If there were any shortcoming, it is atoned for by the honour of seeing your Majesty, in person.

PRETENDER : We do not show ourselves to the general public, but your great devotion of loyalty to us has made it our pleasure not to deny ourselves to you.

KANCHI : It is truly hard for us, your Majesty, to bear the weight of your gracious favours.

PRETENDER : We fear we shall not be able to stop here long. In the meantime, if you have any favour to ask of us -

KANCHI : We have; but we would speak in private.

PRETENDER : [to his attendants]. Retire a little from our presence.

[They retire]

Now you can express without reserve.

KANCHI : There will be no reserve on our part-our only fear is that you might think reserve necessary for yourself.

PRETENDER : Oh no, you need have no scruples on that score.

KANCHI : Come then, do us homage by placing your head on the ground.

PRETENDER : It seems my servants have been distributing the Varuni spirits too liberally.

KANCHI : False pretender, it is you who are suffering from an excess of arrogant spirits. Your head will soon roll on the dust.

PRETENDER : Princes, such jokes are not worthy of kings.

KANCHI : Those who will jest with you indeed are near at hand. Soldiers!

PRETENDER : No more, I beg you. It is plain that I owe you homage. *[Bows to the ground.]* Only allow me to escape, and I shall trouble you no more with my presence.

KANCHI : Why should you escape? We will make you King of this place let us carry our joke to its finish. Have you got any following?

PRETENDER : I have. Everyone who sees me in the streets flocks after me. At first when I had a meagre retinue everyone regarded me with suspicion, but now with the increasing crowd their doubts are dissolving. The crowd is being hypnotized by its own magnitude.

KANCHI : Excellent? From this moment we all promise to help and stand by you. But you will have to do us a service in return.

PRETENDER : Your commands and the crown you are placing on my head will be equally binding and sacred.

KANCHI : At present we want nothing more than a sight of the Queen Sudarshana. You will have to see to this.

PRETENDER : I shall spare no pains.

KANCHI : We cannot put much faith in your pains— you will be solely directed by our instructions. But now you can go and join the festivities in the royal arbour with all possible splendour and magnificence.

[They go out]

IV

Turret of the royal palace.

[Queen SUDARSHANA and ROHINI]

SUDARSHANA: You may make mistakes, Rohini, but I cannot be mistaken: Am I not the Queen? *[Pointing to a figure in the -distance]* *That,* of course, must be my King.

ROHINI : He who has conferred such high honour upon you cannot be long in showing himself to you.

SUDARSHANA: His very form makes me restless like a caged bird. Did you try well to ascertain who he is?

ROHINI : Yes, I did. Everyone I asked said he was the King-he whose flag has the *Kimshuk* flower on it.

SUDARSHANA: I recognized him at once of course, but I do wish that Surangama were here. There would remain no room for doubt then.

ROHINI : Do you think her cleverer than all of us?

SUDARSHANA: Oh no, but she would recognize him instantly.

ROHINI : I cannot believe that! She merely pretends to know him, for there are none to test her knowledge. If we were as shameless as she is it would not have been difficult for us to boast about our acquaintance with the King.

SUDARSHANA: But no, she never boasts.

ROHINI : It is sheer affectation, which often goes a longer way than open boasting. She is up to all manner of tricks: that is why we could never get to like her.

SUDARSHANA: Whatever you may say, I should have liked to ask her.

ROHINI : But is not everyone saying it[7] Listen! The acclamations of the people mount even to this height!

SUDARSHANA: Then do this for me: put these flowers on a lotus leaf, and take them to him.

ROHINI : And what am I to say if he asks me who sends them?

SUDARSHANA: You will not have to say anything-he will know. He thought that I would not be able to recognize him. I cannot spare him the knowledge that I have found him out.

[ROHINI goes out *with the flowers]*

My *heart* is all a-quiver tonight: I have never felt like this before. The light of the full moon is flooding the heavens and brimming over like the babbling foam of wine... It rushes to my blood. It intoxicates me.- Here, who is there?

[Enter a SERVANT]

SERVANT : What is your Majesty's pleasure?

SUDARSHANA: Do you see those boys singing and moving

through the avenues of the mango trees? Call them hither, bring them to me. I want to hear them sing.

[SERVANT, goes out and enters with the BOYS]

Come, living emblems of youthful spring, begin your-festive song! All my mind and body is music tonight-but its ineffable melody eludes my voice. Do you then sing for me.

[Song]

My sorrow is sweet to, me in this spring night.

My pain smiles at the chords of my love and softly sings.

Visions take *birth from my yearning eves and flit in the moonlit sky.*

The scents from the deep of the woodlands have lost their, way *in* my dreams.

Words come to my ears in whispers I know not whence..

And bells in my anklets tremble and tinkle in time with my throbbing heart.

SUDARSHANA: Enough, enough-I cannot bear it any more! Your song has filled my eyes with tears ... a fancy comes to me that desire can never attain its object-it need never attain it. Dear boys of the hermitage! How shall I reward you? This necklace is but made of jewels, hard stones-its hardness will give you pain-I have got nothing like the garlands of flowers which you wear.

[The BOYS bow and go out]

[Enter ROHINI]

I have done ill Rohini - I have done ill. I feel ashamed to ask what happened. I have just realized that no hand can really give the greatest of gifts. Still, let me hear all.

ROHINI : When I gave the King those flowers he did not appear to understand.

SUDARSHANA: What! He did not understand?

ROHINI : No, he sat there silent like an idol. I think he did not wish to show that he understood not, so he kept silence.

SUDARSHANA: Ah my shame! My forwardness has been justly punished. Why did you not bring back my flowers?

ROHINI : How could I? The Prince of Kanchi, very clever man, who was sitting by him, took in everything at a glance. He smiled and said, 'King, Queen Sudarshana sends your Majesty her greetings with blossoms that belong to the Cod of Love.' The King seemed to awake with a start and said, 'Ah! This indeed the crown of all my regal glory tonight'.

I was coming back, all out of countenance, when the Prince of Kanchi took off this necklace of jewels from the King's person, and said to me, 'Friend, the King's garland is bestowed upon you, in return for the happy greetings you have brought'.

SUDARSHANA: What, Kanchi had to make the King understand all this? What else could I expect? Leave me, Rohini, I would be alone for a time .

[ROHINI goes out]

A great blow has shattered my pride today, and yet ... I cannot efface from my mind that fascinating form! I am vanquished, utterly helpless... I cannot even turn away from him. O how the wish comes back to me again and again to beg that garland of Rohini! ... But what would she think of me? ... Rohini!

[Enter ROHINI]

ROHINI : What is your wish?

SUDARSHANA: What reward do you deserve for your services today[7]

ROHINI : Nothing from you-but I had my reward from the King, as it should be.

SUDARSHANA: That was no free gift, but an extortion. I do not like to see you wear what was given with such want of grace. Take it off-I give you my bracelets, take them and go now.

[ROHINI goes out]

Another defeat! I should have thrown this necklace away-but I could not! It is pricking me as if it were a garland of thorns-but I cannot throw it away. This is what the good of the festival has awarded me tonight-this necklace of shame!

V

[The Pretender and the Prince of KANCHI]

KANCHI : You must do exactly as I have said. Let there be no mistake.

PRETENDER : There shall be none.

KANCHI : The Queen Sudarshana's chambers are in the...

PRETENDER : Yes, Prince, I have marked the place well.

KANCHI : What you have got to do is to set fire to the garden, and then you will take advantage of the confusion to accomplish your object.

PRETENDER : I shall remember.

KANCHI : Look here, Sir Pretender, I cannot help thinking that a needless fear is troubling you- there is really no King in this country.

PRETENDER : My sole aim shall be to rid the country of this anarchy. Your common man cannot live without a King, whether a real one or a fraud! Anarchy is always a source of danger.

KANCHI : Pious benefactor of the people! Your wonderful self-sacrifice should really be an example to all of us. I am almost persuaded to do this extra-ordinary service to the people myself.

[They go out]

VI

The inner garden

[GARDENERS *preparing to leave. Enter* ROHINI]

ROHINI : What is the matter? I cannot understand what is happening. (To the GARDENERS] Where are you all going in such haste?

1ST GARDENER : We are going away out of the garden.

ROHINI : Where to?

2ND GARDENER: We do not know whither-the King has called us.

ROHINI : Why, the King is in the garden. Which King has called you?

1ST GARDENER: Which King we cannot say.

2ND GARDENER: The King we have been serving all our life, of course.

ROHINI : Are you all going?

1ST GARDENER: Yes, all - we must be gone instantly, or we might get into trouble.

[They go out]

ROHINI : I cannot understand their words ... I am afraid, They are scampering off like wild animals flying from the bank of a river before it is washed away by the torrent.

[Enter Prince of KOSHALA]

KOSHALA : Rohini, do you know where your King and Kanchi have gone?

ROHINI : They are somewhere in the garden, but I could not tell you where.

KOSHALA : I really cannot understand their intentions: I have not done well to put any trust in Kanchi.

[Exit.]

ROHINI : What is this dark affair going on amongst these kings? Something dreadful is going to happen soon.

[Enter Prince *of* AVANTI]

AVANTI : Rohini, do you know where the other princes are?

ROHINI : It is difficult to say which of them is where. The Prince of Koshala just passed by in this direction.

AVANTI : I am not thinking of Koshala. Where are your King and Kanchi?

ROHINI : I have not seen them for some time.

AVANTI : Kanchi seems to be avoiding us. He is certainly planning some deception. I have not done well to get into his hands. Friend, could you tell me any way out of this garden?

ROHINI : I know of none. '

AVANTI : Is there no man here who can show me the way out?

ROHINI : The servants have all left the garden.

AVANTI : Why?

ROHINI : I could not exactly understand. They said the King had commanded them to leave the garden at once.

AVANTI : The King? Which King?

ROHINI : That they could not exactly say.

AVANTI : This does not sound well, I must find my way out at all costs. I must not stay here another instant.

[Goes out hurriedly.]

ROHINI : Where shall I find the King? He did not seem much interested in me when I gave him the flowers the Queen had sent-but ever since he has been showering gifts on me. This causeless generosity makes me much afraid... Whither are the birds flying at such an hour of the night? What has frightened them all of a sudden? Why is the Queen's pet deer running that way? Chapala! Chapala! She does not even hear my call. Never have I seen a night like this! All the horizon has suddenly become red, like a madman's eye! The sun seems to be setting at this untimely hour in every direction all at once! What madness of the Almighty is this! O,. I am frightened!.. Where am I to find the King?

VII

At the door of the Queen's palace.

[The PRETENDER *and the* Prince of KANCHI]

PRETENDER : What is this you have done, Lord Kanchi?

KANCHI : I wanted to fire only this part of the garden near the palace-I had no idea that it would spread so quickly on all sides. Tell me,, quick, the way out of this garden.

PRETENDER : I know nothing at all about it. Those who brought us here have all fled.

KANCHI : You are a native of this country-you must know the way.

PRETENDER : I have never entered these inner gardens before.

KANCHI : I will have no excuses-you must show me the way, or I shall split you in two.

PRETENDER : But that would not help you out of the garden.

KANCHI : How is it then that you went about claiming that you were the King of this country?

PRETENDER : I am not the King-I am not the King. *[Throwing himself on tlie ground with folded hands]* Where art thou, my King? Save me, oh save me! I am a rebel-punish me, but spare my life!

KANCHI : What is the use of shouting and cringing to the empty air?

PRETENDER : I shall lie down here-I shall not move a step. I give myself tip to the King's mercy.

KANCHI : I will not endure this folly. If I must be burnt to death, you shall bear me company to the very end.

[From the outside—'Oh, save us, our King! The Fire is closing in on us']

KANCHI : Fool, get up, lose no more time.

[Enter Queen SUDARSHANA]

SUDARSHANA : King, O my King! Save me. Save me from this death! am surrounded by fire.

PRETENDER : Where is the King? I am no King!

SUDARSHANA : You're not the King?

PRETENDER : No, I am a hypocrite, a scoundrel.

[Flings his crown on the ground and goes out with the Prince of KANCHI]

SUDARSHANA : No King! He is not the King? Then, O thou God of fire, burn me to ashes! I throw myself into thy hands, O thou great purifier; burn to ashes my shame, my desire.

[Enter ROHINI]

ROHINI : Queen, where are you going? Your inner chambers are shrouded in raging fire-enter not there.

SUDARSHANA: Yes! Yes! I will enter those burning chambers! To the fire of my death!

[Exit into the palace.]

VIII

The dark chamber

[The KING, *and Queen* SUDARSHANA]

KING : Do not be afraid-you have no cause for fear. The fire cannot reach this room.

SUDARSHANA: I need no longer fear-but oh my shame has accompanied me like a raging fire.

KING : It will be long before this burning ceases.

SUDARSHANA: This fire will never cease-will never cease!

KING : Despair not, Queen!

SUDARSHANA: O King, I would hide nothing from you ... I have another's garland round my neck.

KING : That garland too is mine-how else could he have got it?

SUDARSHANA: But it is his gift to me: yet I could not fling it away! When the fire came raging round me, I thought of throwing this garland into it. But no, I could not. My heart whispered. 'Let that garland be on you in your death'... What fire is this, O King, into which I, who had come out to see you, leaped like a moth that could not resist the flame?

KING : But you have seen me at last-has not your desire been fulfilled?

SUDARSHANA: But did I seek to see you in the midst of this dreadful doom? I know not what I saw, but my heart is still beating fast with fear.

KING : What did you see?

SUDARSHANA: Terrible, oh, it was terrible! I am afraid even to think of it again.—Oh you are dark and terrible as the everlasting night! I only looked on you for one dreadful instant. The blaze of the fire fell on your features-they were like the awful night when a comet swings fearfully into our ken- oh then I closed my eyes-I could not look on you any more. Dread, as the

threatening storm-cloud, dark as the shoreless sea with the spectral tint of twilight on its tumultuous waves!

KING : Did I not warn you that you could not bear the sight of me unless really prepared? This is why I wished to reveal myself to you slowly, not with too great a suddenness.

SUDARSHANA: But my sin came and destroyed all your hopes-the very possibility of a union with you has now become unthinkable to me.

KING : It will be possible in time, my Queen. The utter darkness that has to-day shaken you to your soul will one day be your solace and salvation. What else can my love exist for?

SUDARSHANA: It cannot be, it is impossible. What can your love alone do? My love has now turned away from you. Beauty has cast its spell on me. I have told you all: now punish me as you will.

KING : Your punishment has already begun.

SUDARSHANA: But if you do not cast me off. I will leave you -

KING : You are free; do as you choose.

SUDARSHANA: I cannot bear your presence! You fill my heart with anger. Why did they tell me you were fair? You are dark, dark as night- I shall never, I can never, desire you. have seen what I love - it is soft as cream, delicate as the Shirisha flower, beautiful as a butterfly.

KING : It is false as a mirage, empty as a bubble.

SUDARSHANA: Let it be so-still I cannot stand near you. I cannot! Union with you! It is not possible. it cannot be anything but a false union - my heart turns from you in spite of itself.

KING : Will you not even try a little?

SUDARSHANA: I have been trying since yesterday but the more I try, the more rebellious does my heart become. If I stay with you I shall constantly be pursued by the thought that I am impure, that I am false.

KING : Well, then, you can go as far from me as you like.

SUDARSHANA: I cannot fly from you-just because you do not prevent my going. Why do you not hold me back, hold me by the hair, saying, 'You shall not go'? Why do you not strike me? O punish me strike me beat me with violent hands! But your unresisting silence exasperates me-I cannot bear it!

KING : Why do you think that I am really silent? How do you know that l am not trying to keep you back?

SUDARSHANA: Oh, no, no-I cannot bear this-tell me aloud, command me with the voice of thunder, compel me with words that will drown everything else in my ears.

KING : I leave you free, but why should I help you to break away from me?

SUDARSHANA: You will not Well then, I must go!

KING : Go then

SUDARSHANA: If I go thus, am I to blame? You could have held me back by force, but you did not! You have not hindered me-and now I shall go away. Command your sentinels to prevent my going.

KING : No one will stand in your way. You can go as free as the broken storm-cloud driven by the tempest.

SUDARSHANA: I can resist no more-something in me is impelling me forward-I am breaking away from my anchor! Perhaps I shall sink, but I shall return no more.

(She rushes out and comes back with SURANGAMA]

SUDARSHANA [re-entering]. King, O King!

SURANGAMA : He has gone.

SUDARSHANA: Gone? Has he gone? Has he left me? Well then ...then he has cast me off for good! I came back; but he could not wait for me, even for an instant! Since that is so, now I am utterly free. Surangama, did he ask you to keep me back?

SURANGAMA : No, he said nothing.

SUDARSHANA: Why should he say anything? Why should he care for me?... I am then free, perfectly free. But, Surangama, I wanted to ask one thing of the King, but could not letter it in his presence. Tell me if he has punished the prisoners with death.

SURANGAMA : Death? My King never punishes with death.

SUDARSHANA: What has he done to them, then?

SURANGAMA : He has set them at liberty. The Prince of Kanchi has acknowledged his defeat and gone back to his kingdom.

SUDARSHANA: Ah, what a relief ! What a joy that I am free!

SURANGAMA : But are you not afraid of your freedom?

SUDARSHANA : No, why should I be afraid?

SURANGAMA : Do you not fear to meet the monstrous Many?

SUDARSHANA: O, do not talk like that.

SURANGAMA : The monster Many with its hundred licking tongues!

SUDARSHANA: O Stop!

SURANGAMA : I already feel its hissing breath all around us. Ah, you have left the refuge of the one!

SUDARSHANA: Refuge! Why, I am fleeing from it. The multitude is my salvation. I will lose and forget myself in. its arms.

SURANGAMA : Never more shall you forget yourself. Every moment will hit you, every step will lead you to doubt and uncertainty.

SUDARSHANA: Ah, the mad delight of uncertainty! I am in love with it.

SURANGAMA: My Queen, I have one prayer to make to you.

SUDARSHANA: You need not utter your prayer in words, Surangama. Whatever jewels the King gave me, I leave to you-I am not worthy to wear them now.

SURANGAMA : No, I do not want them, my Queen. My unadorned plainness is good enough for me. My master has not given me anything of which I can boast before people.

SUDARSHANA: What do you want of me then?

SURANGAMA : I too shall go with you, my Queen.

SUDARSHANA: Consider what you are saying; You want to leave your master. What a prayer for you to make!

SURANGAMA : I shall not go far from him-when you go out unguarded he will be with you, close by your side.

SUDARSHANA: You are talking nonsense, my child. I wanted to take Rohini with me, but she would not come. What gives you courage enough to wish to come with me?

SURANGAMA : I have got neither courage nor strength. But I shall go - courage will come of itself, and strength too will come.

SUDARSHANA: No, how can I take you with me; your presence will constantly remind me of my shame. I shall never endure that.

SURANGAMA : O, my Queen, I have made all your good and all your evil my own, will you treat me as a stranger still? I must go with you.

IX

A room in the palace of KANYAKUVJA

[The King of KANYAKUVJA *and his* MINISTER]

MINISTER : Sire, do not be angry with her. Princess Sudarshana has come to you as your daughter.

KANYAKUVJA: Do not plead for her. She has left her husband, she has lost her place in the world.

MINISTER : But still she is a princess.

KANYAKUVJA: No, she has burst through her bonds, she has no more claims upon her past.

MINISTER : What arrangements shall I make for her residence in the palace?

KANYAKUVJA: Do not trouble yourself. about that. I have already sent her word that she will have to live here as a maidservant if she must stay in my house.

MINISTER : It will be hard and bitter for her.

KANYAKUVJA: You do not know with what deadly fear this daughter of mine has inspired me. She is coming to my home laden with peril.

MINISTER : What do you fear, Sire?

KANYAKUVJA: I feel that she has entered this house by breaking its wall, and the security and peace of my home is endangered. She has dug a hole in the dyke and the flood will follow; already I seem to hear its roar.

[Enter ATTENDANT]

ATTENDANT : Victory be to you. Sire, a messenger from a foreign land is waiting to have an audience.

KANYAKUVJA: God grant that it be not a messenger of evil.

(They go out and enter- SUDARSHANA *dressed as a maidservant, and* SURANGAMA]

SUDARSHANA: Go from me, Surangama! It drives me to fury to see you so patient and so submissive.

SURANGAMA : With whom are you angry?

SUDARSHANA: I do not know, but I long to see everything involved in destruction! I felt my place on the throne as the queen in a moment's time-did I lose my all to sweep the dust, to sweat and slave in this dismal hole? Alone, I am all alone. O, I am terribly

alone!

SURANGAMA : I wish you were alone, my Queen! You are surrounded on all sides-the whole world is pressing upon you-it is suffocating you.

SUDARSHANA : Surangama, I shall not keep anything from you. When he set the palace on fire, I could not be angry with him. A great inward joy set my heart a-flutter all the while. What a stupendous crime! How glorious! It was this terrible joy that enabled me to leave everything behind me in a moment's time. But is all this nothing but my own imagining? Why is there so sign of his coming anywhere?

SURANGAMA : He of whom you are thinking did not set fire to the palace-it was the Prince of Kanchi who did it.

SUDARSHANA: Ah! Coward! But is it possible? Have I deceived myself? But Surangama, don't you think your King should yet have come to take me back?

[SURANGAMA *remains silent.]*

You think I am anxious to go back? Never! Even if the King really came I should not return. Not even once did he forbid me to depart and I found all the doors wide open to let me out! And the stony and dusty road over which I walked-it cared not at all that a Queen was treading on it. It is hard-like your King-it is unfeeling! The meanest who walks upon it is the same as the highest. You are silent, silent? Well, I tell you, your King's behaviour is-mean, brutal, shameful!

SURANGAMA : Everyone knows that my King is hard and pitiless-no one has ever been able to move him.

SUDARSHANA: Surangama, look a cloud of dust seems to rise over the Eastern horizon across the fields.

SURANGAMA : Yes, I see it.

SUDARSHANA: Is that not like the banner of a chariot ?

SURANGAMA : Yes, indeed, a banner it is.

SUDARSHANA: Then he is coming. He has come at last!

SURANGAMA : Who is coming?

SUDARSHANA: Our King, who else? How could he live without me?

SURANGAMA : No, no, this cannot be the King. I see it plain, Sudarshana, , it is that Monster.

SUDARSHANA: Monster!

SURANGAMA : Yes, it has smelt your flesh, it has come out of its hole with its greedy glaring eyes. It is the Many.

SUDARSHANA : You always talk in riddles.

SURANGAMA : It is no riddle of mine, my Queen. you yourself have made your life a riddle, its meaning is all upset.

SUDARSHANA: Ah! How you frighten me Surangama. I feel I am pursued, but I do not clearly see by whom, Go out, Surangama, and see what is happening and come back and tell me everything.

[SURANGAMA *goes out and enters the* DOORKEEPER*]*

DOORKEEPER : You must be her maid.

SUDARSHANA: Whose maid?

DOORKEEPER : Of Princess Sudarshana.

SUDARSHANA: That is possible.

DOORKEEPER : Do not evade my question. It is no longer a secret that the Princess has left her husband and is living in this palace.

SUDARSHANA: If it were true I should not talk about it

DOORKEEPER : Yes, it is a shame that should be hidden-but it glows like a blush and spreads all over the country-this country of her father.

SUDARSHANA: I know, it is her curse, she cannot remain concealed, even her hiding place betrays her.

DOORKEEPER: Has she no love for her father, and her father's people?

SUDARSHANA: What makes you doubt that?

DOORKEEPER! Does she not see that she has come here as an evil fate?

SUDARSHANA: The wretched creature has no power to do harm to anybody but herself. She is too destitute. Why are you afraid of her?

DOORKEEPER: We are afraid of her as we are afraid of the dead who have no business to come back to the land of the living. Tell her she must leave this country without delay. Since she has been here there seems to be an unrest in the air-ugly rumours are flying all about. Men from watch towers say that dust is seen in the horizon, in the east and in the west. Some danger is marching upon us from all sides.

[Sound of a horn outside]

Ah! do you hear the war horn? It has come already.

[Rushes out]

SUDARSHANA: It must be my King. His anger has been aroused at last. He is coming to punish

me. It is a terror and a delight. He must bring his whole army to get this weak woman back. But I will not be defeated.

[Enters SURANGAMA]

SURANGAMA : It is not the King, my Queen.

SUDARSHANA : Not the King? What, has he not come yet! Are you quite sure?

SURANGAMA : No, my King never raises these clouds or dust by his advent. None knows when he comes.

SUDARSHANA: Then this is-

SURANGAMA : The same: he is coming with the Prince of Kanchi.

SUDARSHANA: Do you know his name?

SURANGAMA : His name is Suvarna.

SUDARSHANA: It is he then. My hero is coming now, to release me. Did you know Suvarna?

SURANGAMA : When I was at my father's home, in the gambling den.

SUDARSHANA: No, no, I won't hear anything of him from you. He is my own hero, my only salvation. I shall know him without your telling stories about him. But see, what manner of man your King is! You cannot condemn me now. How could I have waited for him here all my life, toiling like a bondslave. I shall never have your meek and weak submissiveness.

[Enter King of KANYAKUVJA]

[Bowing to him] Father!

KANYAKUVJA: Yes, I am that unfortunate being, your father. I have come to tell you that the Prince Kanchi is at my door claiming you as his by right.

SUDARSHANA: I know not what right he has.

KANYAKUVJA: The right of having set you free from the bond that held you fast and true.

SUDARSHANA: If that be so then I am mine own.

KANYAKUVJA : No, you are like a lotus cut from its stem, at the mercy of every clamorous wave.

SUDARSHANA: Then give me up, father.

KANYAKUVJA: You are but one, one, and your claimants many. I have letters from the Princes of Avanti, Koshala, Vidarbha and Kalinga as well-and they are following with their armies. I wish I could cut you into five pieces to meet their claims.

SUDARSHANA: Father, send no army to fight them; let me go alone to meet these Princes.

MINISTER : Victory be to you. The Princes of Kanchi, Koshala, Avanti, Vidarbha and Kalinga have met in the mango grove across the river. They have agreed among themselves that he whom the Princess accepts as her husband will have her. And they have sent a message saying that they are holding an assembly for the occasion, and the Princess Sudarshana is to be sent there without delay.

KANYAKUVJA: Call up the army, we must get ready to fight.

MINISTER : It is hopeless, sire; we are one against so many, and we are unprepared.

KANYAKUVJA: But it takes no time to prepare to die. Come, we have no time for hesitation.

[KANYAKUVJA and his MINISTER *go out]*

SUDARSHANA: Surangama, I must go to this assembly.

SURANGAMA : And bravely meet your fate and defy it, my Queen.

SUDARSHANA: You take my message to the Princes-salute them for me and tell them that I accept their invitation.

SURANGAMA : I am ready.

[SURANGAMA *goes out]*

SUDARSHANA: O King, my only King! [Taking out a dagger from within her bosom] This body of mine has received a stain-I shall make a sacrifice of it to-day in the dust before all these princes! But shall I never be able to tell you that I know of no stain faithlessness within the innermost chamber of my heart? That dark chamber where you used to come to meet me lies cold and empty within my bosom to-day-but O my Lord! none has opened its doors, none has entered it but you, O King! Will you never come again to open those doors? Then, let death come, for death is dark like yourself.-You are death-O King!

X

A grove of trees

(All the princes, and SURARNA, *the Pretender, as the Prince of* KANCHI'S *umbrella-bearer./*

VIDARBHA : Kanchi, how is it that you have got no single ornament on your person?

KANCHI : Because I entertain no hopes at all, my friend. Ornaments would but double the

shame of my defeat.

KALINGA : But your umbrella-bearer seems to have made up for that-his is loaded with gold and jewellery.

VIRAT : The vanity of the Prince of Kanchi has made him discard all outer embellishments.

PANCHALA : I cannot command his wisdom. Everyone knows that a woman's eyes are like a moth, they fling themselves headlong upon the glare and glitter of jewel and gold.

KALINGA : How much longer shall we have to wait?

KANCHI : Do not grow impatient, Kalinga - sweet are the fruits of delay.

KOSHALA : Kanchi, did you feel as if something shook your seat just now? Is it an earthquake?

KANCHI : Earthquake? I do not know.

VIDARBHA : I cannot regard this as a very auspicious omen.

KANCHI : Everything looks inauspicious to the eye of fear.

VIDARBHA : I fear none except Fate, before which courage is as futile as it is absurd.

PANCHALA : Vidarbha, do not darken today's happy proceedings with your unwelcome auguries.

KANCHI : I never take the unseen into account till it has become 'seen'.

VIDARBHA : But then it might be too late to do anything.

KALINGA : Isn't that music somewhere outside?

PANCHALA : Yes, it certainly sounds like music.

KANCHI : Then at last it must be Queen Sudarshana approaching near. *[Aside to* Suvarna] Suvarna, your must not hide and cower behind me like that. Mind, the umbrella in your hand is shaking!

[Enters DADA *dressed as a warrior]*

[Exits SUVARNA *unperceived)*

KALINGA : Who is that?-Who are you?

PANCHALA : Who is this that dares to enter this hall unbidden?

VIRAT : Amazing impudence! Kalinga, prevent that fellow from advancing further.

KALINGA : That duty I resign to you, my elders all.

VIDARBHA : Let us rather hear what he has to say.

DADA : The King has come.

VIDARBHA : [starting]. The King?

PANCHALA : Which King?

KALINGA : Where does he come from?

DADA : My King!

VIRAT : Your King?

KALINGA : Who is he?

KOSHALA : What do you mean?

DADA : Who all know whom I mean. He has come.

VIDARBHA : He has come?

KOSHALA : With what intention?

DADA : He has summoned you all to come to him.

KANCHI : Summoned us, indeed? In what terms has he been pleased to summon us, pray?

DADA : You can take his call in any way you like-he is prepared to give all kinds of welcome to suit your various tastes.

VIRAT : But who are you?

DADA : I am one of his generals.

KANCHI : General indeed! Do you think you can frighten us? Do you imagine that I cannot see through your disguise? You dare to pose as a 'general' before us who know you so well!

DADA : You have recognized me to perfection. Who is so unworthy as I to bear my King's commands? And yet it is he who has invested me with these robes of a general and sent me here choosing me before mightier warriors.

KANCHI : It is well. We shall observe the proprieties on a more fitting occasion-but at present we are in the midst of a pressing engagement. The King must wait until our business is at an end.

DADA : When he sends out his call he does not wait.

KOSHALA : We had better obey his call, I am going at once.

VIDARBHA : Kanchi, I cannot agree with your proposal to wait till this function is over. I am going too.

KALINGA : You are older than I am-I shall follow you.

PANCHALA : Look behind you, Kanchi, your regal umbrella is lying in the dust: you have not noticed when your umbrella-holder has stolen away.

KANCHI : All right, general. I too am going-but not to do him homage. I go to fight him on the field of battle.

DADA : My King will meet you then in the field of battle; that is no mean place for your reception.

VIRAT : Look here, friends, perhaps we are all flying before an imaginary terror-it looks as if Kanchi will have the best of it.

PANCHALA : Possibly. When the fruit is so near the hand, it is cowardly and foolish to go away without plucking it.

KALINGA : No, no, it is better to join Kanchi. He cannot be without a definite plan when he is so daring.

XI

[The palace of KANYAKUVJA]

[*Queen* SUDARSHANA *and* SURANGAMA]

SUDARSHANA: The fight is over. When will the King come?

SURANGAMA : I also look for his coming.

SUDARSHANA: I feel such a throb of joy, Surangama, that my very heart is aching. Yet I am dying with shame too; how shall I show my face to him?

SURANGAMA : Go to him in utmost humility and all shame will vanish in a moment.

SUDARSHANA: I confess to you, Surangama, that I have met with a defeat which must endure for the rest of my life. Pride made me claim the largest share in his love so long. Everyone used to say I had wonderful grace and charm; everyone used to say that the King showed me unlimited kindness- this makes it difficult for me to bend my heart in humility before him.

SURANGAMA : This difficulty, My Queen, will pass away.

SUDARSHANA: Oh, yes, it will pass-the day has arrived for me to humble myself before the whole world. But why does not the King come to take me back? What is he still waiting for yet?

SURANGAMA : Have I not told you, my King is cruel?

[Enters DADA]

SUDARSHANA: I have heard that you are my King's friend. Give me good news. Tell me when the King will come to take me back.

DADA : You ask me a hard question, indeed! I hardly understand my friend yet. His fight was fought, but how, I do not know. The battle is over, but no one can tell where he was or where he is.

SUDARSHANA: Is he then gone away?

DADA : I find no trace of him here.

SUDARSHANA: Has he gone? And you call such a person your friend?

DADA : That is why he gets abuse as well as suspicion. But my King is regardless of both.

SUDARSHANA: Has he gone away? Ah! how hard, how cruel, how cruel! He is made of stone! I tried to move him with my own bosom-my breast is torn and bleeding-but I could not move him at all. Dada , tell me, how can you endure such a friend?

DADA : I know him now-I have known him through my griefs and joys-he can make me weep no more.

SUDARSHANA: Will he not let me know him also?

DADA : Of course he will. Nothing less will satisfy him.

SUDARSHANA: Very well, I shall see how hard he can be! I shall stay here near the window. I shall not say a word; I shall not move a step; let me see if he will not come to me!

DADA : You are young still-you can afford to wait for him; but to me, an old man, a moment's loss is an age. I must set out to seek him, whether I succeed or fail.

[*Exits* DADA]

SUDARSHANA: I do not want him-I will not seek him! Surangama, I have no need of your King! Why did he fight with the Princes? Was it for me at all? Did he want to show off his prowess and strength?

SURANGAMA : Show off! Why he was nowhere even seen! and imagine, it was Dada, the playmate of all the village boys who acted as his general.

SUDARSHANA: Go from me - I cannot bear the sight of you. He has humbled me to the dust and still he is not content.

XII

A Street

[A band of CITIZENS]

1ST CIT : When so many Princes met together, we thought some great matter was afoot, but somehow everything took such a turn that nobody knows what happened!

2ND CIT : Did you not see, they could not come to an agreement among themselves-everyone distrusted everyone else.

3RD CIT : None kept to his original plan, one wanted to advance, another thought it better policy to recede, some went to the right, others made a rush to the left; and they did not know with whom they were fighting, nor do we know even now. How can you call that a fight?

1ST CIT : They had no eye to real fighting - each had his eyes on the others.

2ND CIT : Each was thinking, 'Why should I die to enable others to reap the harvest?'

3RD CIT : But you must all admit that the Prince of Kanchi fought like a real hero.

1ST CIT : Yes! For a long time after his defeat he seemed loth to acknowledge himself beaten.

2ND CIT : He was at last pierced to the heart by a deadly missile.

3RD CIT : But before that he did not seem to realize that he had been losing ground at every step.

1ST CIT : As for the other Princes-well, nobody knows where they fled, leaving poor Kanchi alone in the field.

2ND CIT : But I have heard that he did not die.

3RD CIT : No, the physicians saved him-but he will carry the mark of his defeat on his breast till his dying day.

1ST CIT : None of the other Princes who fled escaped, they have all been taken prisoners. But what sort of justice is this that was meted out to them?

2ND CIT : I heard that everyone was punished except Kanchi, whom the judge placed on his right on the throne of justice, putting a crown on his head.

3RD CIT : This beats all mystery hollow.

I ST CIT : Just so. The greatest offender was certainly the Prince of Kanchi; as for the others, greed of gain now pressed them to advance, then again they drew back in fear.

2ND CIT : What kind of justice is this, I ask? It is as the tiger came off scot-free, while his tail was punished.

3RD CIT : They are great, high justices, my friends; their brains are of a different stamp from ours.

1ST CIT : Have they got any brains at all I wonder? They simply indulge their whims as there is no one above them to say they may.

2ND CIT : Whatever you may say, had the power been in our hands we should certainly have governed much better than this.

3RD CIT : There can be no doubt at all about that! It goes without saying.

XIII

A road

[*Queen* SUDARSHANA *and* SURANGAMA]

SUDARSHANA: What a relief, Surangama! It is my defeat that has brought me freedom. O what an iron pride was mine! All through yesternight I lay alone on the dusty floor before that window-lay there through the desolate hours and wept!

SURANGAMA : Last night's heavy and melancholy air seemed as though it would last for an eternity-oh, what a dismal night!

SUDARSHANA: But would you believe it-I seemed to hear the soft strains of the *vina* floating through the dark. Could he play such tender tunes, he who is so dark and terrible? The world knows only my indignity-but none- but my own heart could hear those strains that called me through the lone and wailing night. Did you too, Surangama, hear that *vina!* Or was that but a dream of mine?

SURANGAMA : It is for this call of music that I have all along been listening with an eager ear.

SUDARSHANA: He did at last send me on to the open road-I could not withstand his will. When I shall find him, the first words that I shall tell him will be, 'I have come of my own will-I have not awaited your coming'. I shall say, 'For your sake have I trodden the hard and weary road, and bitter and

ceaseless has been my weeping all the way'. I shall at least have this pride in me when I meet him.

SURANGAMA : But even that pride will not last. He came before you did-who else could have sent you on the road?

SUDARSHANA: Perhaps he did. As long as a sense of offended pride remained with me, I could not help thinking that he had left me for good-but when I flung my dignity to the winds and came out on the common streets, then it seemed to me that he too had come out: I have been finding him since the moment I was on the road. Ah, yes, he has come-he has held me by the hand, just as he used to do in that chamber of darkness, when, at his touch, all my body would start with a sudden thrill: it is the same, the same touch again! Who says that he is not here?-Surangama, can you not see that he has come, in silence and secret? ... Who is that there? Look, Surangama, there is a third traveller on this dark road at this hour of night.

SURANGAMA : I see, it is the Prince of Kanchi, my Queen.

SUDARSHANA: Kanchi?

SURANGAMA : Do not be afraid, my Queen!

SUDARSHANA: Afraid! Why should I be afraid, The days of fear are gone for ever from me.

KANCHI : [entering.] Queen-mother, I see you too on this road! I travel the same way as yourself. Have no fear of me, O Queen!

SUDARSHANA: It is well, Prince of Kanchi, that we should be going together, side by side-this is but right. I crossed your path when first I left my home, and now I meet you again on my way back. Who could have dreamed that first meeting of ours would augur so well?

KANCHI : But, Queen-mother, it is not right that you should walk this road on foot. Will you parmit me to get a chariot for you?

SUDARSHANA: Oh, do not say so: I shall never be happy if I cannot on my way back home tread every particle of the dust of the road that led me away from my King.

SURANGAMA : But, Prince, you too are walking in the dust today: This road has never known anybody driving a chariot over it. Look, my Queen, there on the Eastern horizon comes the dawn. We have not long to walk: ! See the spires of the golden turrets of the King's palace.

[Enter DADA]

DADA : My child, it is dawn at last!

SUDARSHANA: Your benedictions have given me god speed, Dada, and here I am, at last.

DADA : But see how discourteous our King is! He has sent no chariot, no band of music, no royal pomp to meet you.

SUDARSHANA: How can you say that? The sky is crimson from end to end, the air is full of the welcoming fragrance of flowers.

DADA : Yes, But however cruel our King may be, we cannot but feel pain at seeing you thus, my child. How can we bear to see you going to the King's palace in this poor attire? Wait a little-I am running to fetch you your Queenly garments.

SUDARSHANA: Oh, no, no, no! He has taken away those regal robes from me for ever-he has attired me in a servant's dress before the eyes of the whole world: what a relief this has been to me! I am his servant now, no longer his Queen. Today I stand at the feet of all those who can claim any relationship with him.

DADA : But your enemies will laugh at you now.

SUDARSHANA: May their laughter be immortal-let them throw dust at me in the streets: this dust will today be the powder with which I shall deck myself to meet my lord.

DADA : Well then, let us play the last game of our spring festival- instead of the pollen of flowers let the south breeze blow and scatter the lowly dust in its every directions We shall go to the lord clad in common grey. And we shall find him too covered all over with dust.

KANCHI : Dada, do not forget me in this game of yours! I also will have to get this royal garment of mine soiled beyond recognition.

DADA : That will not take long, my brother. Now that you have come down so far you will quickly change your colour. Look at our Queen she was displeased with herself and thought that she could spoil her matchless beauty by flinging away her ornaments: but this insult has made it shine forth in tenfold radiance, and now it is in its unadorned perfection.

SURANGAMA : Lo, there rises the sun!

XIV

The dark chamber

(The KING *and Queen* SUDARSHANA]

SUDARSHANA : Lord, do not give me back the honour which you once turned away from me! I am the servant of your feet-I only seek the privilege of serving you.

KING : Will you be able to bear me now?

SUDARSHANA: Oh, yes, yes, I can. I was repelled from you because I had sought to find you in the pleasure garden, in my Queen's chamber; there even your meanest servant looks fairer than you. That fever of longing has left my eyes for ever. You are not beautiful, my lord-you are beyond compare.

KING : That which can be matched with me lies within yourself.

SUDARSHANA: If this be so, then that too is beyond compare. Your love lives in me-you are mirrored in that love, and you see your face reflected in me; nothing of this is mine, it is all yours, O Lord!

KING : I open the doors of this dark room today-the game is finished here! Come, come with me now, come outside-into *the light1*

SUDARSHANA: Before I go, let me bow at the feet of my lord of darkness, my cruel, my terrible, my peerless one!

5

The Hungry Stones

5

The Hungry Stones

MY kinsman and myself were returning to Calcutta from our Puja trip when we met the man in a train. From his dress and bearing we took him at first for an up-country Mahomedan, but we were puzzled as we heard him talk. He discoursed upon all subjects so confidently that you might think the Disposer of All Things consulted him at all times in all that he did. Hitherto we had been perfectly happy, as we did not know that secret and unheard-of forces were at work, that the Russians had advanced close to us, that the English had deep and secret policies, that confusion among the native chiefs had come to a head. But our newly acquired friend said with a sly smile: "There happen more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are reported in your newspapers." As we had never stirred out of our homes before, the demeanour of the man struck us dumb with wonder. Even on the most trivial topic he would quote science or comment on the Vedas or repeat quatrains from some Persian poet, and as we had no knowledge of science or the Vedas or Persian, our admiration for him increased, and my kinsman, a theosophist, was convinced that our fellow-passenger must have been supernaturally inspired by some strange magnetism or occult power or astral body. He listened with devotional rapture to even the tritest saying of our extraordinary companion, and secretly took notes of the conversation. I think that the man saw this and was pleased by it. When the train reached its junction, we stood in the waiting-room for our connection. It was 10 p.m., and since we heard that the train was likely to be quite late, because of something wrong in the lines, I spread my bed on the table and was about to lie down for a comfortable doze, when this extraordinary person began spinning the following yarn. Of course, I got no sleep that night.

"When, owing to a disagreement about some questions of administrative policy, I quit my post at Junagarh and entered the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad, they appointed me at once, as a strong young man, collector of cotton duties at Barich.

"Barich is a lovely place. The *Susta* chatters over stones and babbles on the pebbles, tripping through the woods like a skilful dancing girl. A flight of 150 steps rises from the river, above which, at the foot of the hills, stands a solitary marble palace. Nobody lives nearby; the village and the cotton market are far away.

"About 250 years ago, Emperor Mahmud Shah II built this lonely palace for his pleasure and luxury. In those days jets of rose-water spurted from its fountains, and on the cold marble floors of its spray-cooled rooms young Persian women sat, their hair dishevelled before bathing, and splashing their soft naked feet in the clear water of the reservoirs, would sing the *ghazals* of their vineyards, to the tune of a guitar.

"The fountains play no longer, the songs have ceased, white feet no longer step gracefully on the snowy marble. It is now the lonely home of men oppressed with solitude and deprived of the society of women. Karim Khan, my old office clerk, repeatedly warned me not to take up my abode there. 'Pass the day there if you like,' said he, 'but never stay the night.' I passed it off with a light laugh. The servants said that they would work till dark and then go away. I gave my assent. The house had such a bad name that even thieves would not venture near it after dark.

"At first the solitude of the deserted palace weighed upon me like a nightmare. I would stay out, and work hard as long as possible, then return home at night, jaded and tired, go to bed and fall asleep.

"Before a week had passed, the place began to exert a weird fascination upon me. It is difficult to describe or to induce people to believe; but I felt as if the whole house was like a living organism slowly and imperceptibly digesting me by the action of some stupefying gastric juice.

"Perhaps the process had begun as soon as I set my foot in the house, but I distinctly remember the day on which 1 first was conscious of it.

"It was the beginning of summer, and the market being dull I had no work to do. A little before sunset I was sitting in an arm-chair near the water's edge below the steps. The *Susta* had shrunk and sunk low; a broad patch of sand on the other side glowed with the hues of evening; on this side the pebbles at the bottom of the clear shallow waters were glistening. There was not a breath of wind anywhere, and the still air was laden with an oppressive scent from the spicy shrubs growing on the hills close by.

"As the sun sank behind the hill-tops a long dark curtain fell upon the stage of day, and the intervening hills cut short the time in which light and shade mingle at sunset. I thought of going out for a ride, and was about to get up when I heard a footfall on the steps behind. I looked back, but there was no one.

"As I sat down again, thinking it to be an illusion, I heard many footfalls, as if a large number of persons was rushing down the steps. A strange thrill of delight, slightly tinged with fear, passed through my frame, and though there was not a figure before my eyes, I thought I saw a bevy of joyous maidens coming down the steps to bathe in the *Susta* in that summer evening.

Not a sound was in the valley, in the river, or in the palace, to break the silence, but I distinctly heard the maidens' gay and mirthful laugh, like the gurgle of a spring gushing forth in a hundred cascades, as they ran past me, in quick playful pursuit of each other, towards the river, without noticing me at all. As they were invisible to me, so I was, as it were, invisible to them. The river was perfectly calm, but I

felt that its still, shallow, and clear waters were stirred suddenly by the splash of many an arm jingling with bracelets, that the girls laughed and dashed and spattered water at one another, that the feet of the fair swimmers tossed the tiny waves up in showers of pearl.

I felt a thrill at my heart-I cannot say whether the excitement was due to fear or delight or curiosity. I had a strong desire to see them more clearly, but naught was visible before me. I thought I could catch all that they said if I only strained my ears; but however hard I strained them, I heard nothing but the chirping of the cicadas in the woods. It seemed as if a dark curtain of 250 years was hanging before me, and I would fain lift a corner of it tremblingly and peer through, though the assembly on the other side was completely enveloped in darkness.

"The oppressive closeness of the evening was broken by a sudden gust of wind, and the still surface of the *Susta* rippled and curled like the hair of a nymph, and from the woods, wrapt in the evening gloom, there came forth a simultaneous murmur, as though they were awakening from a black dream. Call it reality or dream, the momentary glimpse of that invisible mirage reflected from a far-off world, 250 years old, vanished in a flash. The mystic forms that brushed past me with their quick unbodied steps, and loud, voiceless laughter, and threw themselves into the river, did not go back wringing their dripping robes as they went. Like fragrance wafted away by the wind they were dispersed by a single breath of the spring.

"Then I was filled with a lively fear that it was the .Muse that had taken advantage of my solitude and possessed me-the witch had evidently come to ruin a poor devil like myself making a living by collecting cotton duties. I decided to have a good dinner-it is the empty stomach that all sorts of incurable diseases find an easy prey. I sent for my cook and gave orders for a rich, sumptuous *moghlai* dinner, redolent of spices and, *ghi.*

"Next morning the whole affair appeared a queer fantasy. With a light heart I put on a *sola* hat like the *sahebs,* and drove out to my work. I was to have written my quarterly report that day, and expected to return late; but before it was dark I was strangely drawn to my house-by what I could not say-I felt they were all waiting and that I should delay no longer. Leaving my report unfinished I rose, put on my sola hat, and startling the dark, shady, desolate path with the rattle of my carriage, I reached the vast silent palace standing on the gloomy skirts of the hills.

"On the first floor, the stairs led to a very spacious hall, its roof stretching wide over ornamental arches resting on three rows of massive pillars, and groaning day and night under the weight of its own intense solitude. The day had just closed, and the lamps had not yet been lighted. As I pushed the door open a great bustle seemed to follow within, as if a throng of people had broken up in confusion, and rushed out through the doors and windows and corridors and verandas and rooms, to make its hurried escape.

"As I saw no one I stood bewildered, my hair on end in a kind of ecstatic delight, and a faint scent of *attar* and unguents almost effaced by age lingered in my nostrils. Standing in the darkness of that vast desolate hall between the rows of those ancient pillars, I could hear the gurgle of fountains splashing on the marble floor, a strange tune on the guitar, the jingle of ornaments and the tinkle of anklets, the clang of bells tolling the hours, the distant note of *nahabat,* the din of the crystal pendants of chandeliers shaken by the breeze, the song of *bulbuls* from the cages in the corridors, the cackle of storks in the gardens, all creating round me a strange unearthly music.

"Then I came under such a spell that this intangible, inaccessible, unearthly vision appeared to be the only reality in the world-and all else a mere dream. That I, that is to say, Srijut So-and-so, the eldest son of So-and-so of blessed memory, should be drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 450 by the discharge of my duties as collector of cotton duties, and driving in my dog-cart to my office every day in a short coat and *sola* hat, appeared to me to be such an astonishingly ludicrous illusion that I burst into a horse-laugh, as I stood in the gloom of that vast silent hall.

"At that moment my servant entered with a lighted kerosene lamp in his hand. I do not know whether he thought me mad, but it came back to me at once that I was in very deed Srijut So-and-so, son of So-and-so of blessed memory, and that, while our poets, great and small, alone could say whether inside or outside the earth there was a region where unseen fountains perpetually played and fairy guitars, struck by invisible fingers, sent forth an eternal harmony, this at any rate was certain, that I collected duties at the: cotton market at Barich, and earned thereby Rs. 450 per mensem as my salary. I laughed in great glee at my curious illusion, as I sat over the newspaper at my camp-table, lighted by the kerosene lamp.

"After I had finished my paper and eaten my *moghlai* dinner, I put out the lamps, and lay down on my bed in a small side-room. Through the open window a radiant star, high above the Avalli hills skirted by the darkness of their woods, was gazing intently from millions and millions of miles away in the sky at Mr. Collector lying on a humble camp-bedstead. I wondered and felt amused at the idea, and do not know when I fell asleep or how long I slept; but I suddenly awoke with a start, though I heard no sound and saw no intruder-only the steady bright star on the hilltop had set, and the dim light of the new moon was stealthily entering the room through the open window, as if ashamed of its intrusion.

I saw nobody, but felt as if some one was gently pushing me. As I awoke she said not a word, but beckoned me with her five fingers bedecked with rings to follow her cautiously. I got up noiselessly, and, though not a soul save myself was there in the countless apartments of that deserted palace with its slumbering sounds and waking echoes, I feared at every step lest any one should wake up. Most of the rooms of the palace were always kept closed, and I had never entered them.

"I followed breathless and with silent steps my invisible guide-I cannot now say where. What endless dark and narrow passages, what long corridors, what silent and solemn audience-chambers and close secret cells I crossed!

"Though I could not see my fair guide, her form was not invisible to my mind's eye; an Arab girl, her arms, hard and smooth as marble, visible through her loose sleeves, a thin veil falling on her face from the fringe of her cap, and a curved dagger at her waist! Methought that one of the thousand and one. Arabian Nights had been wafted to me from the world of romance, and that at the dead of night I was wending my way through the dark narrow alleys of slumbering Bagdad to a trysting-place fraught with peril.

"At last my fair guide stopped abruptly before a deep blue screen, and seemed to point to something below. There was nothing there, but a sudden dread froze the blood in my heart-methought I saw there on the floor at the foot of the screen a terrible negro eunuch dressed in rich brocade, sitting and dozing with outstretched legs, with a naked sword on his lap. My fair guide lightly tripped over his legs and held a fringe of the screen. I could catch a glimpse of a part of the room spread with a Persian carpet-some one was sitting inside on a bed-I could not see her, but only caught a glimpse of two exquisite feet in gold - embroidered slippers, hanging out from loose saffron-coloured *pajamas* and placed idly on the orange-coloured velvet carpet. On one side there was a bluish crystal tray on which a few apples, pears, oranges, and bunches of grapes in plenty, two small cups, and a gold-tinted decanter were evidently awaiting the guest. A fragrant intoxicating vapour, issuing from a strange sort of incense that burned within, almost overpowered my senses.

"As with trembling heart I made an attempt to step across the outstretched legs of the eunuch, he woke up suddenly with a start,and the sword fell from his lap with a sharp clang on the marble floor.

"A terrific scream made me jump, and I saw I was sitting on that camp-bedstead of mine sweating heavily; and the crescent moon looked pale in the morning light like a weary sleepless patient at dawn; and our crazy Meher Ali was crying out, as is his daily custom, "Stand back! Stand back!!" while he went along the lonely road.

"Such was the abrupt close of one of my Arabian Nights; but there were yet a thousand nights left.

"Then followed a great discord between my days and nights. During the day I would go to my work worn and tired, cursing the bewitching night and her empty dreams, but as night came my daily life with its bonds and shackles of work would appear a petty, false, ludicrous vanity.

"After nightfall I was caught and overwhelmed in the snare of a strange intoxication. I would then be transformed into some unknown personage of a bygone age, playing my part in unwritten history; and my short English coat and tight breeches did not suit me in the least. With a red velvet cap on my head, loose *pajamas,* an embroidered vest, a long flowing silk gown, and coloured handkerchiefs scented with *attar, I* would complete my elaborate toilet, sit on a high-cushioned chair, and replace my cigarette with a many-coiled narghileh filled with rosewater, as if in eager expectation of a strange meeting with the beloved one.

"I have no power to describe the marvellous incidents that unfolded themselves as the gloom of the night deepened. I felt as if in the curious apartments of that vast edifice the fragments of a beautiful story, which I could follow for some distance, but of which I could never see the end, flew about in a sudden gust of the vernal breeze. And all the same I would wander from room to room in pursuit of them the whole night long.

"Amid the eddy of these dream-fragments, amid the smell of *henna* and the twanging of the guitar, amid the waves of air charged with fragrant spray, I would catch like a flash of lightning the momentary glimpse of a fair damsel. She it was who had saffron-coloured *pajamas,* white ruddy soft feet in gold-embroidered slippers with curved toes, a close-fitting bodice wrought with gold, a red cap, from which a golden frill fell on her snowy brow and cheeks.

"She had maddened me. In pursuit of her I wandered from room to room, from path to path among the bewildering maze of alleys in the enchanted dreamland of the nether world of sleep.

"Sometimes in the evening, while arraying myself carefully as a prince of the blood-royal before a large mirror, with a candle burning on either side, I would see a sudden reflection of the Persian beauty by the side of my own. A swift turn of her neck, a quick eager glance of intense passion and pain, glowing in her large dark eyes, just a suspicion of speech on her dainty red lips, her figure, fair and slim, crowned with youth like a blossoming creeper, quickly uplifted in her graceful tilting gait, a dazzling flash of pain and craving and ecstasy, a smile and a glance and a blaze of jewels and silk, and she melted away. A wild gust of wind, laden with all the fragrance of hills and woods, would put out my light, and I would fling aside my dress and lie down on my bed, my eyes closed and my body thrilling with delight, and there around me in the breeze, amid all the perfume of the woods and hills, floated through the silent gloom many a caress and many a kiss and many a tender touch of hands, and gentle murmurs in my ears, and fragrant breaths on my brow; or a sweetly-perfumed kerchief was wafted again and again on my cheeks. Then slowly a mysterious serpent would twist her stupefying coils about me; and heaving a heavy sigh, I would lapse into insensibility, and then into a profound slumber.

"One evening I decided to go out on my horse- I do not know who implored me to stay-but I would listen to no entreaties that day. My English hat and coat were resting on a rack, and I was about to take them down when a sudden whirlwind, crested with the sands of the *Susta* and the dead leaves of the Avalli hills, caught them up, and whirled them round and round, while a loud peal of merry laughter rose higher and higher, striking all the chords of mirth till it died

away in the land of sunset.

"I could not go out for my ride, and the next day I gave up my queer English coat and hat for good.

"That day again at dead of night I heard the stifled heart-breaking sobs of some one-as if below the bed, below the floor, below the stony foundation of that gigantic palace, from the depths of a dark damp grave, a voice piteously cried and implored me: "Oh, rescue me! Break through these doors of hard illusion, deathlike slumber and fruitless dreams, place me by your side on the saddle, press me to your heart, and, riding through hills and woods and across the river, take me to the warm radiance of your sunny rooms above!"

"Who am I? Oh, how can I rescue thee? What drowning beauty, what incarnate passion shall I drag to the shore from this wild eddy of dreams? O lovely ethereal apparition! Where didst thou flourish and when? By what cool spring, under the shade of what date-groves, wast thou born-in the lap of what homeless wanderer in the desert? What Bedouin snatched thee from thy mother's arms, an opening bud plucked from a wild creeper, placed thee on a horse swift as lightning, crossed the burning sands, and took thee to the slave-market of what royal city? And there, what officer of the Badshah, seeing the glory of thy bashful blossoming youth, paid for thee in gold, placed thee in a golden palanquin, and offered thee as a present for the seraglio of his master? And O, the history of that place! The music of the sareng[1] the jingle of anklets, the occasional flash of daggers and the glowing wine of Shiraz poison, and the piercing flashing glance! What infinite grandeur, what endless servitude! The slave-girls to thy right and left waved the *chamar*,[2] as diamonds flashed from their bracelets? the Badshah, the king of kings, fell on his knees at thy snowy feet in bejewelled shoes, and outside the terrible Abyssinian eunuch, looking like a messenger of death, but clothed like an angel, stood with a naked sword in his hand! Then, O, thou flower of the desert, swept away by the blood-stained dazzling ocean of grandeur, with its foam of jealousy, its rocks and shoals of intrigue, on what shore of cruel death wast thou cast, or in what other land more splendid and more cruel?

"Suddenly at this moment that crazy Meher Ali screamed out: "Stand back! Stand back!! All is false! All is false!!" I opened my eyes and saw that it was already light. My *chaprasi* came and handed me my letters, and the cook waited with a *salam* for my orders.

"I said: "No, I can stay here no longer." That very day I packed up, and moved to my office. Old Karim Khan smiled a little as he saw me. I felt nettled, but said nothing, and fell to my work.

"As evening approached I grew absent-minded; I felt as if I had an appointment to keep; and the work of examining the cotton accounts seemed wholly useless; even the *Nizamat*[3] of the Nizam did not appear to be of much worth. Whatever belonged to the present, whatever was moving and acting and working for bread seemed trivial, meaningless, and contemptible.

"I threw my pen down, closed my ledgers, got into my dog-cart and drove away. I noticed that it stopped of itself at the gate of the marble palace just at the hour of twilight. With quick steps I climbed the stairs, and entered the room.

"A heavy silence was reigning within. The dark rooms were looking sullen as if they had taken offence. My heart was full of contrition, but there was no one to whom I could lay it bare, or of whom I could ask forgiveness. I wandered about the dark rooms with a vacant mind. I wished I had a guitar to which I could sing to the unknown; "O fire, the poor moth that made a vain effort to fly away has come back to thee! Forgive it but this once, burn its wings and consume it in thy flame!"

"Suddenly two tear-drops fell from overhead on my brow. Dark masses of clouds overcast the top of the Avalli hills that day. The gloomy woods and the sooty waters of the *Susta* were waiting in terrible suspense and in an ominous calm. Suddenly land, water, and sky shivered, and a wild tempest-blast rushed howling through the distant pathless woods, showing its lightning-teeth like a raving maniac who had broken his chains. The desolate halls of the palace banged their doors, and moaned in the bitterness of anguish.

"The servants were all in the office, and there was no one to light the lamps. The night was cloudy .and moonless. In the dense gloom within I could distinctly feel that a woman was lying on her face on the carpet below the bed-clasping and tearing her long dishevelled hair with desperate fingers. Blood was trickling down her fair brow, and she was now laughing a hard, harsh, mirthless laugh, now bursting into violent wringing sobs, now rending her bodice and striking at her bare bosom, as the wind roared in through the open window, and the rain poured in torrents and soaked her through and through.

"All night there was no cessation of the storm or of the passionate cry. I wandered from room to room in the dark, with unavailing sorrow. Whom could I console when no one was by? Whose was this intense agony of sorrow? Whence arose this inconsolable grief?

And the mad man cried out: "Stand back! Stand back!! All is false! All is false!!"

I saw that the day had dawned, and Meher Ali was going round and round the palace with his usual cry in that dreadful weather. Suddenly it came to me that perhaps he also had once lived in that house, and that, though he had gone mad, he came there every day, and went round and round, fascinated by the weird spell cast by the marble demon.

Despite the storm and rain I ran to him and asked: "Ho, Meher Ali, what is false?"

The man answered nothing, but pushing me aside went round and round with his frantic cry, like a bird flying fascinated about the jaws of a snake, and made a desperate effort to warn himself by repeating. "Stand back! Stand back!! All is false! All is false!"

1. Sareng : A sort of violin
2. Chamer : Chowrie, yak-tail
3. Nizamat : Royalty

I ran like a mad man through the pelting rain to my office, and asked Karim Khan: "Tell me the meaning of all this!"

What I gathered from that old man was this: That at one time countless unrequited passions and unsatisfied longings and lurid flames of wild blazing pleasure raged within that palace, and that the curse of all the heart-aches and blasted hopes had made its every stone thirsty and hungry, eager to swallow up like a famished ogress any living man who might chance to approach. Not one of those who lived there for three consecutive nights could escape these cruel jaws, save Meher Ali, who had escaped at the cost of his reason.

I asked: "Is there no means whatever of my release?" The old man said: "There is only one means, and that is very difficult. I will tell you what it is, but first you must hear the history of a young Persian girl who once lived in that pleasure-dome. A stranger or a more bitterly heartrending tragedy was never enacted on this earth."

Just at this moment the coolies announced that the train was coming. So soon? We hurriedly packed up our luggage, as the train steamed in. An English gentleman, apparently just aroused from slumber, was looking out of a first-class carriage endeavouring to read the name of the station.

The Victory

SHE was the Princess Ajita. And the court poet of King Narayan had never seen her. On the day he recited a new poem to the king he would raise his voice just to that pitch which could be heard by unseen hearers in the screened balcony high above the hall. He sent up his song towards the star-land out of his reach, where, circled with light, the planet who ruled his destiny shone unknown and out of ken.

He would espy some shadow moving behind the veil. A tinkling sound would come to his ear from afar, and would set him dreaming of the ankles whose tiny golden bells sang at each step. Ah, the rosy red tender feet that walked the dust of the earth like God's mercy on the fallen! The poet had placed them on the altar of his heart, where he wove his songs to the tune of those golden bells. Doubt never arose in his mind as to whose shadow it was that moved behind the screen, and whose anklets they were that sang to the time of his beating heart.

Manjari, the maid of the princess, passed by the poet's house on her way to the river, and she never missed a day to have a few words with him on the sly. When she found the road deserted, and the shadow of dusk on the land, she would boldly enter his room, and sit at the corner of his carpet. There was a suspicion of an added care in the choice of the colour of her veil, in the setting of the flower in her hair.

People smiled and whispered at this, and they were not to blame. For Shekhar the poet never took the trouble to hide the fact that these meetings were a pure joy to him.

The meaning of her name was the *spray of flowers*. One must confess that for an ordinate mortal it was sufficient in its sweetness. But Shekhar made his own addition to this name, and called her the Spray of Spring Flowers. And ordinary mortals shook their heads and said, Ah, me!

In the spring songs that the poet sang the praise of the spray of spring flowers was conspicuously reiterated; and the king winked and smiled at him when he heard it, and the poet smiled in answer.

The king would put him the question: "Is it the business of the bee merely to hum in the court of the spring?"

The poet would answer: "No, but also to sip the honey of the spray of spring flowers."

And they all laughed in the king's hall. And it was rumoured that the Princess Ajita also laughed at her maid's accepting the poet's name for her, and Manjari felt glad in her heart.

Thus truth and falsehood mingle in life-and to what God builds man adds his own decoration.

Only those were pure truths which were sung by the poet. The theme was Krishna, the lover god, and Radha, the beloved, the Eternal Man and the Eternal Woman, the sorrow

that comes from the beginning of time, and the joy without end. The truth of these songs was tested in his inmost heart by everybody from the beggar to the king himself. The poet's songs were on the lips of all. At the merest glimmer of the moon and the faintest whisper of the summer breeze his songs would break forth in the land from windows and courtyards, from sailing-boats, from shadows of the wayside trees, in numberless voices.

Thus passed the days happily. The poet recited, the king listened, the hearers applauded, Manjari passed and repassed by the poet's room on her way to the river-the shadow flitted behind the screened balcony, and the tiny golden bells tinkled from afar.

Just then set forth from his home in the south a poet on his path of conquest. He came to King Narayan, in the kingdom of Amarapur. He stood before the throne, and uttered a verse in praise of the king. He had challenged all the court poets on his way, and his career of victory had been unbroken.

The king received him with honour, and said; "Poet, I offer you welcome."

Pundarik, the poet, proudly replied: "Sire, I ask for war."

Shekhar, the court poet of the king did not know how the battle of the muse was to be waged. He had no sleep at night. The mighty figure of the famous Pundarik, his sharp nose curved like a scimitar, and his proud head tilted on one side, haunted the poet's vision in the dark.

With a trembling heart Shekhar entered the arena in the morning. The theatre was filled with the crowd.

The poet greeted his rival with a smile and a bow. Pundarik returned it with a slight toss of his head, and turned his face towards his circle of adoring followers with a meaning smile.

Shekhar cast his glance towards the screened balcony high above, and saluted his lady in his mind, saying: "If I am the winner at the combat to-day, my lady, thy victorious name shall be glorified."

The trumpet sounded. The great crowd stood up, shouting victory to the king. The king, dressed in an ample robe of white, slowly came into the hall like a floating cloud of autumn, and sat on his throne.

Pundarik stood up, and the vast hall became still. With his head raised high and chest expanded, he began in his thundering voice to recite the praise of King Narayan. His words burst upon the walls of the hall like breakers of the sea, and seemed to rattle against the ribs of the listening crowd. The skill with which he gave varied meanings to the name Narayan, and wove each letter of it through the web of his verses in all manner of combinations, took away the breath of his amazed hearers.

For some minutes after he took his seat his voice continued to vibrate among the numberless pillars of the king's court and in thousands of speechless hearts. The learned professors who had come from distant lands raised their right hands, and cried, Bravo!

The king threw a glance on Shekhar's face, and Shekhar in answer raised for a moment his eyes full of pain towards his master, and then stood up like a stricken deer at bay. His face was pale, his bashfulness was almost that of a woman, his slight youthful figure, delicate in its outline, seemed like a tensely strung *vina* ready to break out in music at the least touch.

His head was bent, his voice was low, when he began. The first few verses were almost inaudible. Then he slowly raised his head, and his clear sweet voice rose into the sky like a quivering flame of fire. He began with the ancient legend of the kingly line lost in the haze of the past, and brought it down through its long course of heroism and matchless generosity to the present age. He fixed his gaze on the king's face, and all the vast and unexpressed love of the people for the royal house rose like incense in his song, and enwreathed the throne on all sides. These were his last words when, trembling, he took his seat: 'My master, I may be beaten in play of words, but not in my love for thee."

Tears filled the eyes of the hearers, and the stone walls shook with cries of victory.

Mocking this popular outburst of feeling, with an august shake of his head and a contemptuous sneer, Pundarik stood up, and flung this question to the assembly: "What is there superior to words?" In a moment the hall lapsed into silence again.

Then with a marvellous display of learning, he proved that the Word was in the beginning, that the Word was God. He piled up quotations from scriptures, and built a high altar for the Word to be seated above all that there is in heaven and in earth. He repeated that question in his mighty voice: "What is there superior to words?"

Proudly he looked around him. None dared to accept his challenge, and he slowly took his seat like a lion who had just made a full meal of its victim. The pandits shouted, Bravo! The king remained silent with wonder, and the poet Shekhar felt himself of no account by the side of this stupendous learning. The assembly broke up for that day.

Next day Shekhar began his song. It was of that day when the pipings of love's flute startled for the first time the hushed air of the Vrinda forest. The shepherd women did not know who was the player or whence came the music. Sometimes it seemed to come from the heart of the south wind, and sometimes from the straying clouds of the hill-tops. It came with a message of tryst from the land of the sunrise, and it floated from the verge of sunset with its sigh of sorrow. The stars seemed to be the stops of the instrument that flooded the dreams of the night with melody. The music seemed to burst all at once from all sides, from fields and groves, from the shady lanes and lonely roads, from the melting blue of the sky, from the shimmering green of the grass. They neither knew its meaning nor could they find words to give utterance to the desire of their hearts. Tears

filled their eyes, and their life seemed to long for a death that would be its consummation.

Shekhar forgot his audience, forgot the trial of his strength with a rival. He stood alone amid his thoughts that rustled and quivered round him like leaves in a summer breeze, and sang the Song of the Flute. He had in his mind the vision of an image that had taken its shape from a shadow, and the echo of a faint tinkling sound of a distant footstep.

He took his seat. His hearers trembled with the sadness of an indefinable delight, immense and vague, and they forgot to applaud him. As this feeling died away Pundarik stood up before the throne and challenged his rival to define who was this Lover and who was the Beloved. He arrogantly looked around him, he smiled at his followers and then put the question again: "Who is Krishna, the lover, and who is Radha, the beloved?"

Then he began to analyse the roots of those names,-and various interpretations of their meanings. He brought before the bewildered audience all the intricacies of the different schools of metaphysics with consummate skill. Each letter of those names he divided from its fellow, and then pursued them with a relentless logic till they fell to the dust in confusion, to be caught up again and restored to a meaning never before imagined by the subtlest of wordmongers.

The pandits were in ecstasy; they applauded vociferously; and the crowd followed them, deluded into the certainty that they had witnessed, that day, the last shred of the curtains of Truth torn to pieces before their eyes by a prodigy of intellect. The performance of his tremendous feat so delighted them that they forgot to ask themselves if there was any truth behind it after all.

The king's mind was overwhelmed with wonder. The atmosphere was completely cleared of all illusion of music, and the vision of the world around seemed to be changed from its freshness of tender green to the solidity of a highroad levelled and made hard with crushed stones.

To the people assembled their own poet appeared a mere boy in comparison with this giant, who walked with such ease, knocking down difficulties at each step in the world of words and thoughts. It became evident to them for the first time that the poems Shekhar wrote were absurdly simple, and it must be a mere accident that they did not write them themselves. They were neither new, nor difficult, nor instructive, nor necessary.

The king tried to goad his poet with keen glances, silently inciting him to make a final effort. But Shekhar took no notice, and remained fixed to his seat.

The king in anger came down from his throne- took off his pearl chain and put it on Pundarik's head. Everybody in the hall cheered. From the upper balcony came a slight sound of the movements of rustling robes and waist-chains hung with golden bells. Shekhar rose from his seat and left the hall.

It was a dark night of waning moon. The poet Shekhar took down his MSS. from his shelves and heaped them on the floor. Some of them contained his earliest writings, which he had almost forgotten. He turned over the pages, reading passages here and there. They all seemed to him poor and trivial-mere words and childish rhymes!

One by one he tore his books to fragments, and threw them into a vessel containing fire, and said: "To thee, to thee, O my beauty, my fire! Thou hast been burning in my heart all these futile years. If my life were a piece of gold it would come out of its trial brighter, but it is a trodden turf of grass, and nothing remains of it but this handful of ashes."

The night wore on. Shekhar opened wide his windows. He spread upon his bed the white flowers that he loved, the jasmines, tuberoses and chrysanthemums, and brought into his bedroom all the lamps he had in his house and lighted them. Then mixing with honey the juice of some poisonous root, he drank it and lay down on his bed.

Golden ankles tinkled in the passage outside the door, and a subtle perfume came into the room with the breeze.

The poet, with his eyes shut, said: "My lady, have you taken pity upon your servant at last and come to see him?"

The answer came in a sweet voice: "My poet, I have come."

Shekhar opened his eyes-and saw before his bed the figure of a woman.'

His sight was dim and blurred. And it seemed to him that the image made of a shadow that he had ever kept throned in the secret shrine of his heart had come into the outer world in his last moment to gaze upon his face.

The woman said: "I am the princess Ajita."

The poet with a great effort sat up on his bed.

The princess whispered into his ear: "The king has not done you justice. It was you who won at the combat, my poet, and I have come to crown you with the crown of victory."

She took the garland of flowers from her own neck, and put it on his hair and the poet fell down upon his bed stricken by death.

Once There Was A King

ONCE upon a time there was a king."

When we were children there was no need to know who the king in the fairy story was. It didn't matter whether he was called Shiladitya or Shaliban, whether he lived at Kashi or Kanauj. The thing that made a seven-year-old boy's heart go thump, thump with delight was this one sovereign truth, this reality of all realities: "Once there was a king."

But the readers of this modern age are far more exact and exacting. When they hear such an opening to a story, they are at once critical and suspicious. They apply the searchlight of science to its legendary haze and ask: "Which king?"

The story-tellers have become more precise in their turn. They are no longer content with the old indefinite, "There was a king," but assume instead a look of profound learning, and begin: "Once there was a king named Ajatasatru."

The modern reader's curiosity, however, is not so easily satisfied. He blinks at the author through his scientific spectacles, and asks again: "Which Ajatasatru?"

"Every schoolboy knows," the author proceeds, "that there were three Ajatasatrus. The first was born in the twentieth century B.C., and died at the tender age of two years and eight months. I deeply regret that it is impossible to find, from any trustworthy source, a detailed account of his reign. The second Ajatasatru is better known to historians. If you refer to the new Encyclopedia of History..."

By this time the modern reader's suspicions are dissolved. He feels he may safely trust his author. He says to himself: "Now we shall have a story that is both improving and instructive."

Ah! how we all love to be deluded! We have a secret dread of being thought ignorant. And we end by being ignorant after all, only we have done it in a long and roundabout way.

There is an English proverb: "Ask me no questions, and I will tell you no lies." The boy of seven who is listening to a fairy story understands that perfectly well; he withholds his questions, while the story is being told. So the pure and beautiful falsehood of it all remains naked and innocent as a babe; transparent as truth itself; limpid as a fresh bubbling spring. But the ponderous and learned lie of our moderns has to keep its true character draped and veiled. And if there is discovered anywhere the least little peephole of deception, the reader turns away with a prudish disgust, and the author is discredited.

When we were young, we understood all sweet things; and we could detect the sweets of a fairy story by an unerring science of our own. We never cared for such useless things as knowledge. We only cared for truth. And our unsophisticated little hearts knew well where the Crystal Palace of Truth lay and how to reach it. But today we are expected to write pages of facts, while the truth is simply this:

"There was a king."

I remember vividly that evening in Calcutta when the fairy story began. The rain and the storm had been incessant. The whole of the city was flooded. The water was knee-deep in our lane. I had a straining hope, which was almost a certainty, that my tutor would be prevented from coming that evening. I sat on the stool in the far corner of the veranda looking down the lane, with a heart beating faster and faster. Every minute I kept my eye on the rain, and when it began to grow less I prayed with all my might: "Please, God, send some more rain till halfpast seven is over." For f was quite ready to believe that there was no other need for rain except to protect one helpless boy one evening in one corner of Calcutta from the deadly clutches of his tutor.

If not in answer to my prayer, at any rate according to some grosser law of physical nature, the rain did not give up.

But, alas! nor did my teacher.

Exactly to the minute, in the bend of the lane, I saw his approaching umbrella. The great bubble of hope burst in my breast, and my heart collapsed. Truly, if there is a punishment to fit the crime after death, then my tutor will be born again as me, and I shall be born as my tutor.

As soon as I saw his umbrella I ran as hard as I could to my mother's room. My mother and my grandmother were sitting opposite one another playing cards by the light of a lamp. I ran into the room, and flung myself on the bed beside my mother, and said:

"Mother dear, the tutor has come, and I have such a bad headache; couldn't I have no lessons to-day?"

I hope no child of immature age will be allowed to read this story, and I sincerely trust it will not be used in text-books or primers for schools. For what I did was dreadfully bad, and I received no punishment whatever. On the contrary, my wickedness was crowned with success.

My mother said to me: "All right," and turning to the servant added: "Tell the tutor that he can go back home."

It was perfectly plain that she didn't think my illness very serious, as she went on with her game as before, and took no further notice. And I also, burying my head in the pillow, laughed to my heart's content. We perfectly understood one another, my mother and I.

But every one must know how hard it is for a boy of seven years old to keep up the illusion of illness for a long time. After about a minute I got hold of Grandmother, and said: "Grannie, do tell me a story."

I had to ask this many times. Grannie and Mother went on playing cards, and took no notice. At last Mother said to me: "Child, don't bother. Wait till we've finished our game." But I persisted: "Grannie, do tell me a story." I told Mother she could finish her game to-morrow, but she must let Grannie tell me a story there and then.

At last Mother threw down the cards and said: "You had better do what he wants. I can't manage him." Perhaps she had it in her mind that she would have no tiresome tutor on the morrow, while I should be obliged to be back to those stupid lessons.

As soon as ever Mother had given way, I rushed at Grannie. I got hold of her hand, and, dancing with delight, dragged her inside my mosquito curtain on to the bed. I clutched hold of the bolster with both hands in my excitement, and jumped up and down with joy, and when I had got a little quieter, said: "Now, Grannie, let's have the story!"

Grannie went on: "And the king had a queen." That was good to begin with. He had only one.

It is usual for kings in fairy stories to be extravagant in queens. And whenever we hear that there are two queens, our hearts begirt to sink. One is sure to be unhappy. But in Grannie's story that danger was past. He had only one queen.

We next hear that the king had not got any son. At the age of seven I didn't think there was any need to bother if a man had had no son. He might only have been in the way.

Nor are we greatly excited when we hear that the king has gone away into the forest to practise austerities in order to get a son. There was only one thing that would have made me go into the forest, and that was to get away from my tutor!

But the king left behind with his queen a small girl, who grew up into a beautiful princess.

Twelve years pass away, and the king goes on practising austerities, and never thinks all this while of his beautiful daughter. The princess has reached the full bloom of her youth. The age of marriage has passed, but the king does not return. And the queen pines away with grief and cries: "Is my golden daughter destined to die unmarried? Ah me! what a fate is mine."

Then the queen sent men to the king to entreat him earnestly to come back for a single night and take one meal in the palace. And the king consented.

- The queen cooked with her own hand, and with the greatest care, sixty-four dishes, and made a seat for him of sandal-wood, and arranged the food in plates of gold and cups of silver. The princess stood behind with the peacock-tail fan in her hand. The king, after twelve years' absence, came into the house, and the princess waved the fan, lighting up all the room with her beauty. The king looked in his daughter's face, and forgot to take his food.

At last he asked his queen: "Pray, who is this girl whose beauty shines as the gold image of the goddess? Whose daughter is she?"

The queen beat her forehead, and cried. "Ah, how evil is my fate! Do you not know your own daughter?"

The king was struck with amazement. He said at last: "My tiny daughter has grown to be a woman."

"What else?" the queen said with a sigh. "Do you not know that twelve years have passed by?"

"But why did you not give her in marriage?" asked the king.

"You were away," the queen said, "And how could I find her a suitable husband?"

The king became vehement with excitement. "The first man 1 see tomorrow," he said, "when I come out of the palace shall marry her."

The princess went on waving her fan of peacock feathers, and the king finished his meal.

The next morning, as the king came out of his palace, he saw the son of a Brahman gathering sticks in the forest outside the palace gates. His age was about seven or eight.

The king said: "I will marry my daughter to him."

Who can interfere with a king's command? At once the boy was called, and the marriage garlands were exchanged between him and the princess.

At this point I came up close to my wise Grannie and asked her eagerly: "What then?"

In the bottom of my heart there was a devout wish to substitute myself for that fortunate wood-gatherer of seven years old. The night was resonant with the patter of rain. The earthen, lamp by my bedside was burning low. My grandmother's voice droned on as she told the story. And all these things served to create in a corner of my credulous heart the belief that I had been gathering sticks in the dawn of some indefinite time in the kingdom of some unknown king, and in a moment garlands had been exchanged between me and the princess, beautiful as the Goddess of Grace.

She had a gold band on her hair and gold earrings in her ears. She had a necklace and bracelets of gold, and a golden waist-chain round her. waist, and a pair of golden anklets tinkled above her feet.

If my grandmother were an author how many explanations she would have to offer for this little story! First of all, every one would ask why the king remained twelve years in the forest? Secondly, why should the King's daughter remain unmarried all that while? This would be regarded as absurd.

Even if she could have got so far without a quarrel, still there would have been a great hue and cry about the marriage itself. First, it never happened. Secondly, how could there be a marriage between a princess of the Warrior Caste and a boy of the priestly Brahman Caste? Her readers would have imagined at once that the writer was preaching against our social customs in an underhand way. And they would write letters to the papers.

So I pray with all my heart that my grandmother may be born a grandmother again, and not through some cursed fate take birth as her luckless grandson.

So with a throb of joy and delight, I asked Grannie:

"What then?"

Grannie went on: Then the princess took her little husband away in great distress, and built a large palace with seven wings, and began to cherish her husband with great care.

I jumped up and down in my bed and clutched at the bolster more tightly than ever and said: "What then?"

Grannie continued: The little boy went to school and learnt many lessons from his teachers, and as he grew up his class-fellows began to ask him: "Who is that beautiful lady who lives with you in the palace with the seven wings?"

The Brahman's son was eager to know who she was. He could only remember how one day he had been gathering sticks, and a great disturbance arose. But all that was so long ago that he had no clear recollection.

Four or five years passed in this way. His companions always asked him: "Who is that beautiful lady in the palace with the seven wings?" And the Brahman's son would come back from school and sadly tell the princess: "My school companions always ask me who is that beautiful lady in the palace with the seven wings, and I can give them no reply. Tell me, oh, tell me who you are!"

The princess said: "Let it pass to-day. I will tell you some other day." And every day the Brahman's son would ask: "Who are you?" and the princess would reply: "Let it pass to-day. I will tell you some other day." In this manner four or five more years passed away.

At last the Brahman's son became very impatient, and said: "If you do not tell me to-day who you are, O beautiful lady, I will leave this palace with the seven wings." Then the princess said: "I will certainly tell you to-morrow."

Next day the Brahman's son, as soon as he came home from school, said: "Now, tell me who you are."

The princess said: "To-night 1 will tell you after supper, when you are in bed."

The Brahman's son said: "Very well"; and he began to count the hours in expectation of the night. And the princess, on her side, spread white flowers over the golden bed, and lighted a gold lamp with fragrant oil, and adorned her hair, and dressed herself in a beautiful robe of blue, and began to count the hours in expectation of the night.

That evening when her husband, the Brahman's son, had finished his meal, too excited almost to eat, and had gone to the golden bed in the bedchamber strewn with flowers, he said to himself: "To-night I shall surely know who this beautiful lady is, in the palace with the seven wings."

The princess took for her the food that was left over by her husband, and slowly entered the bedchamber. She had to answer that night the question, who was the beautiful lady who lived in the palace with the seven wrings. And as she went up to the bed to tell him she found a serpent had crept out of the flowers and had bitten the Brahman's son. Her boy-husband was lying on the bed of flowers, with face pale in death.

My heart suddenly ceased to throb, and I asked with choking voice: "What then?"

Grannie said: "Then..."

But what is the use of going on any further with the story? It would only lead on to what was more and more impossible. The boy of seven did not know that, if there were some "What then?" after death, no grandmother of a grandmother could tell us all about it.

But the child's faith never admits defeat, and it would snatch at the mantle of death itself to turn him back. It would be outrageous for him to think that such a story of one teacherless evening could so suddenly come to a stop. Therefore the grandmother had to call back her story from the ever shut chamber of the great End, but she does it so simply: it is merely by floating the dead body on a banana stem on the river, and having some incantations read by a magician. But in that rainy night and in the dim light of a lamp death loses all its.horror in the mind of the boy, and seems nothing more than a deep slumber of a single night. When the story ends the tired eyelids are weighed down with sleep. Thus it is that we send the little body of the child floating on the back of sleep over the still water of time, and then in the morning read a few verses of incantation to restore him to the world of life and light.

The Home-Coming

PHATIK Chakravorti was ringleader among the boys of the village. A new mischief got into his head. There was a heavy log lying on the mudflat of the river waiting to be shaped into a mast for a boat. He decided that they should all work together to shift the log by main force from its place and roll it away. The owner of the log would be angry and surprised, and they would all enjoy the fun. Every one seconded the proposal, and it was carried unanimously.

But just as the fun was about to begin, Makhan, Phatik's younger brother, sauntered up, and sat down on the log in front of them all without a word. The boys were puzzled for a moment. He was pushed, rather timidly, by one of the boys and told to get up: but he remained quite unconcerned. He appeared like a young philosopher meditating on the futility of games. Phatik was furious. "Makhan," he cried "if you don't get down this minute, I'll thrash you!"

Makhan only moved to a more comfortable position.

Now, if Phatik was to keep his regal dignity before the public, it was clear he ought to carry out his threat. But his courage failed him at the crisis. His fertile brain, however, rapidly seized upon a new mansuvre which would discomfit his brother and afford his followers an added amusement. He gave the word of command to roll the log and Makhan over together. Makhan heard the order, and made it a point of honour to stick on. But he overlooked the fact, like those who attempt earthly fame in other matters, that there was peril in it.

The boys began to heave at the log with all their might, calling out, "One, two, three, go." At the word 'go' log went; and with it went Makhan's philosophy, glory and all.

All the other boys shouted themselves hoarse with delight. But Phatik was a little frightened. He knew what was coming. And, sure enough, Makhan rose from Mother Earth blind as Fate and screaming like the Furies. He rushed at Fhatik and scratched his face and beat him and kicked him, and then went crying home. The first act of the drama was over.

Phatik wiped his face, and sat down on the edge of a sunken barge on the river bank, and began to chew a piece of grass. A boat came up to the landing, and a middle-aged man, with grey hair and dark moustache, stepped on shore. He saw the boy sitting there doing nothing, and asked him where the Chakravortis lived. Phatik went on chewing the grass, and said: "Over there," but it was quite impossible to tell where he pointed. The stranger asked him again. He swung his legs to and fro on the side of the barge, and said: "Go and find out," and continued to chew the grass as before.

But now a servant came down from the house, and told Phatik his mother wanted him. Phatik refused to move. But the servant was the master on this occasion. He took Phatik up roughly, and carried him, kicking and struggling in impotent rage.

When Phatik came into the house, his mother saw him. She called out angrily: "So you have been hitting Makhan again?"

Phatik answered indignantly: "No, I haven't; who told you that?"

His mother shouted: "Don't tell lies! You have."

Phatik said suddenly: "I tell you, I haven't. You ask Makhan!" But Makhan thought it best to stick to his previous statement. He said: "Yes, mother. Phatik did hit me."

Phatik's patience was already exhausted. He could not bear this injustice. He rushed at Makhan and hammered him with blows: "Take that," he cried, "and that, and that, for telling lies."

His mother took Makhan's side in a moment, and pulled Phatik away, beating him with her hands. When Phatik pushed her aside, she shouted out: "What! you little villain! would you hit your own mother?"

It was just at this critical juncture that the grey-haired stranger arrived. He asked what was the matter. Phatik looked sheepish and ashamed.

But when his mother stepped back and looked at the stranger, her anger was changed to surprise. For she recognised her brother, and cried: "Why, Dada! Where have you come from.?"

As she said these words, she bowed to the ground and touched his feet. Her brother had gone away soon after she had married, and he had started business in Bombay. His sister had lost her husband while he was in Bombay. Bishamber had now come back to Calcutta, and had at once made enquiries about his sister. He had then hastened to see her as soon as he found out where she was.

The next few days were full of rejoicing. The brother asked after the education of the two boys. He was told by his sister that Phatik was a perpetual nuisance. He was lazy, disobedient, and wild. But Makhan was as good as gold, as quiet as a lamb, and very found of reading. Bishamber kindly offered to take Phatik off his sister's hands, and educate him with his own children in Calcutta. The widowed mother readily agreed. When his uncle asked Phatik if he would like to go to Calcutta with him, his joy knew no bounds, and he said: "Oh, yes, uncle!" in a way that made it quite clear that he meant it.

- It was an immense relief to the mother to get rid of Phatik. She had a prejudice against the boy, and no love was lost between the two brothers.

She was in daily fear that he would either drown Makhan some day in the river, or break his head in a fight, or run him into some danger or other. At the same time she was somewhat distressed to see Phatik's extreme eagerness to get away.

Phatik, as soon as all was settled, kept asking his uncle

every minute when they were to start. He was on pins and needles all day long with excitement, and lay awake most of the night. He bequeathed to Makhan, in perpetuity, his fishing-rod, his big kite, and his marbles. Indeed, at this time of departure his generosity towards Makhan was unbounded.

When they reached Calcutta, Phatik made the acquaintance of his aunt for the first time. She was by no means pleased with this unnecessary addition to her family. She found her own three boys quite enough to manage without taking any one else. And to bring a village lad of fourteen into their midst was terribly upsetting. Bishamber should really have thought twice before committing such an indiscretion.

In this world of human affairs there is no worse nuisance than a boy at the age of fourteen. He is neither ornamental nor useful. It is impossible to shower affection on him as on a little boy; and he is always getting in the way. If he talks with a childish lisp he is called a baby, and if he answers in a grown-up way he is called impertinent. In fact any talk at all from him is resented. Then he is at the unattractive, growing age. He grows out of his clothes with indecent haste; his voice grows hoarse and breaks and quavers; his face grows suddenly angular and unsightly. It is easy to excuse the shortcomings of early childhood, but it is hard to tolerate even unavoidable lapses in a boy of fourteen. The lad himself becomes painfully self-conscious. When he talks with elderly people he is either unduly forward, or else so unduly shy that he appears ashamed of his very existence.

Yet it is at this very age when in his heart of hearts a young lad most craves for recognition and love; and he becomes the devoted slave of any one who shows him consideration. But none dare openly love him, for that would be regarded as undue indulgence, and therefore bad for the boy. So, what with scolding and chiding, he becomes very much like a stray dog that has lost his master.

For a boy of fourteen his own home is the only Paradise. To live in a strange house with strange people is little short of torture, while the height of bliss is to receive the kind looks of women, and never to be slighted by them.

It was anguish to Phatik to be unwelcome guest in his aunt's house, despised by this elderly woman, and slighted on every occasion. If she ever asked him to do anything for her, he would be so overjoyed that he would overdo it; and then she would tell him not to be so stupid, but to get on with his lessons.

The cramped atmosphere of neglect in his aunt's house oppressed Phatik so much that he felt that he could hardly breathe. He wanted to go out into the open country and fill his lungs and breathe freely. But there was no open country to go to. Surrounded on all sides by Calcutta houses and walls, he would dream night after night of his village home, and long to be back there. He remembered the glorious meadow where he used to fly his kite all day long; the broad river-banks where he would wander about the livelong day singing and shouting for joy; the narrow brook where he could go and dive and swim at any time he liked. He thought of his band of boy companions over whom he was despot; and, above all, the memory of that tyrant mother of his, who had such a prejudice against him, occupied him day and night. A kind of physical love like that of animals; a longing to be in the presence of the one who is loved; an inexpressible wistfulness during absence; a silent cry of the inmost heart for the mother, like the lowing of a calf in the twilight; this love, which was almost an animal instinct, agitated the shy, nervous, lean, uncouth and ugly boy. No one could understand it, but it preyed upon his mind continually.

There was no more backward boy in the whole school than Phatik. He gaped and remained silent when the teacher asked him a question, and like an overladen ass patiently suffered all the blows that came down on his back. When other boys were out at play; he stood wistfully by the window and gazed at the roofs of the distant houses. And if by chance he espied children playing on the open terrace of any roof, his heart would ache with longing.

One day he summoned up all his courage, and asked his uncle: "Uncle, when can I go home?"

His uncle answered: "Wait till the holidays come."

But the holidays would not come till November, and there was a long time still to wait.

One day Phatik lost his lesson-book. Even with the help of books he had found it very difficult indeed to prepare his lesson. Now it was impossible. Day after day the teacher would cane him unmercifully. His condition became so abjectly miserable that even his cousins were ashamed to own him. They began to jeer and insult him more than the other boys. He went to his aunt at last, and told her that he had lost his book.

His aunt pursed her lips in contempt, and said: "You great clumsy, country lout. How can I afford, with all my family, to buy you new books five times a month?"

That night, on his way back from school, Phatik had a bad headache with a fit of shivering. He felt he was going to have an attack of malarial fever. His one great fear was that he would be a nuisance to his aunt.

The next morning Phatik was nowhere to be seen. All searches in the neighbourhood proved futile. The rain had been pouring in torrents all night, and those who went out in search of the boy got drenched through to the skin. At last Bishamber asked help from the police.

At the end of the day a police van stopped at the door before the house. It was still raining and the streets were all flooded. Two constables brought out Phatik in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. He was wet through from head to foot, muddy all over, his face and eyes flushed red with fever, and his limbs all trembling. Bishamber carried him in his arms, and took him into the inner apartments. When his wife saw him, she exclaimed: "What a heap of trouble this boy has

given us. Hadn't you better send him home?"

Phatik heard her words, and sobbed out loud: "Uncle, I was just going home; but they dragged me back again.

The fever rose very high, and all that night the boy was delirious. Bishamber brought in a doctor. Phatik opened his eyes flushed with fever, and looked up to the ceiling, and said vacantly: Uncle, have the holiday come yet? May I go home?"

Bishamber wiped the tears from his own eyes, and took Phatik's lean and burning hands in his own, and sat by him through the night. The boy began again to mutter. At last his voice became excited: "Mother," he cried, "don't beat me like that? Mother? I am telling the truth?"

The next day Phatik became conscious for a short time. He turned his eyes about the room, as if expecting some one to come. At last, with an air of disappointment, his head sank back on the pillow. He turned his face to the wall with a deep sigh.

Bishamber knew his thoughts, and, bending down his head, whispered: "Phatik, I have sent for your mother."

The day went by. The doctor said in a troubled voice that the boy's condition was very critical.

Phatik began to cry out: "By the mark!—three fathoms. By the mark- fathoms. By the mark- He had heard the sailor on the riversteamer calling out the mark on the plumb-line. Now he was himself plumbing an unfathomable sea.

Later in the day Phatik's mother burst into the room like a whirlwind, and began to toss from side to side and moan and cry in a loud voice.

Bisharnber tried to calm her agitation, but she flung herself on the bed, and cried: "Phatik, my darling, my darling."

Phatik stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands ceased beating up and down. He said: "Eh?"

The mother cried again: "Phatik-, my darling, my darling."

Phatik very slowly turned his head and, without seeing anybody, said: "Mother, the holidays have come."

My Lord, The Baby

I

RAICHARAN was twelve years old when he came as a servant to his master's house. He belonged to the same caste as his master, and was given his master's little son to nurse. As time went on the boy left Raicharan's arms to go to school. From school he went on to college, and after college lie entered the judicial service. Always, until he married, Raicharan was his sole attendant.

But, when a mistress came into the house, Raicharan found two masters instead of one. All his former influence passed to the new mistress. This was compensated for by a fresh arrival. Anukul had a son born to him, and Raicharan by his unsparing attentions soon got a complete hold over the child. He used to toss him up in his arms, call to him in absurd baby language, put his face close to the baby's and draw it away again with a grin.

Presently the child was able to crawl and cross the doorway. When Raicharan went to catch him, he would scream with mischievous laughter and make for safety. Raicharan was amazed at the profound skill and exact judgment the baby showed when pursued. He would say to his mistress with a look of awe and mystery: "Your son will be a judge some day."

New wonders came in their turn. When the baby began to toddle, that was to Raicharan an epoch in human history. When he called his father Ba-ba and his mother Ma-ma and Raicharan Chan-na, then Raicharan's ecstasy knew no bounds. He went out to tell the news to all the world.

After a while Raicharan was asked to show his ingenuity in other ways. He had, for instance, to play the part of a horse, holding the reins between his teeth and prancing with his feet. He had also to wrestle with his little charge, and if he could not, by a wrestler's trick, fall on his back defeated at the end, a great outcry was certain.

About this tune Anukùl was transferred to a district on the banks of the Padma. On his way through Calcutta he bought his son a little gocart. He bought him also a yellow satin waist-coat, a gold-laced cap, and some gold bracelets and anklets. Raicharan was wont to take these out, and put them on his little charge with ceremonial pride, whenever they went for a walk.

Then came the rainy season, and day after day the rain poured down in torrents. The hungry river, like an enormous serpent, swallowed down terraces, villages, cornfields, and covered with its flood the tall grasses and wild casuarinas on the sandbanks. From time to time there was a deep thud as the river-banks crumbled. The unceasing roar of the main current could be heard from far away. Masses of foam, carried swiftly past, proved to the eye the swiftness of the stream.

One afternoon the rain cleared. It was cloudy, but cool and bright. Raicharan's little despot did not want to stay in on such a fine afternoon. His lordship climbed into the go-cart. Raicharan, between the shafts, dragged him slowly along till he reached the rice-fields on the banks of the river. There was no one in the fields, and no boat on the stream. Across the water, on the farther side, the clouds were rifted in the west. The silent ceremonial of the setting sun was revealed in all its glowing splendour. In the midst of that stillness the child, all of a sudden, pointed with his finger in front of him and cried: "Chan-na! Pitty fow."

Close by on a mud-flat stood a large Kadamba tree in full flower. My lord, the baby, looked at it with greedy eyes, and Raicharan knew his meaning. Only a short time before he had made, out of these very flower balls, a small go-cart; and the child had been so entirely happy dragging it about with a string, that for the whole day Raicharan was not-made to-, put on the reins at all. He was promoted from a horse into a groom.

But Raicharan had no wish that evening to go splashing knee-deep through the mud to reach the flowers. So he quickly pointed his finger in the opposite direction, calling out: "Oh, look, baby, look! Look at the bird." And with all sorts of curious noises he pushed the go-cart rapidly away from the tree.

But a child, destined to be a judge, cannot be put off so easily. And besides, there was at the time nothing to attract his eyes. And you cannot keep up for ever the pretence of an imaginary bird.

The little Master's mind was made up, and Raicharan was at his wits' end. "Very well, baby," he said at last, "you sit still in the cart, and I'll go and get you the pretty flower. Only mind you don't go near the water.

As he said this, he made his legs bare to the knee, and waded through the oozing mud towards the tree.

The moment Raicharan had gone, his little Master went off at racing speed to the forbidden water. The baby saw the river rushing by, splashing and gurgling as it went. It seemed as though the disobedient wavelets themselves were running away from some greater Raicharan with the laughter of a thousand children. At the sight of their mischief, the heart of the human child grew excited and restless. He got down stealthily from the go-cart and toddled off towards the river. On his way he picked up a small stick, and leant over the bank of the stream pretending to fish.

The mischievous fairies of the river with their mysterious voices seemed inviting him into their playhouse.

Raicharan had plucked a handful of flowers from the tree, and was carrying them back in the end of his cloth, with his face wreathed in smiles. But when he reached the go-cart there was no one there. He looked on all sides and there was no one there. He looked back at the cart and there was no one there.

In that first terrible moment his blood froze within him. Before his eyes the whole universe swam round like a dark mist. From the depth of his broken heart he gave one piercing cry: "Master, Master, little Master."

But no voice answered "Chan-na." No child laughed mischievously back: no scream of baby delight welcomed his return. Only the river ran on, with its splashing, gurgling noise as before,-as though it knew nothing at all, and had no time to attend to such a tiny human event as the death of a child.

As the evening passed by Raicharan's mistress became very anxious. She sent men out on all sides to search. They went with lanterns in their hands, and reached at last the banks of the Padma. There they found Raicharan rushing up and down the fields, like a stormy wind, shouting the cry of despair: "Master, Master, little Master!"

When they got Raicharan home at last, he fell prostrate at this mistress's feet. They shook him, and questioned him, and asked him repeatedly where he had left the child; but all he could say was that he knew nothing.

Though every one held the opinion that the Padma had swallowed the child, there was a lurking doubt left in the mind. For a band of gipsies had been noticed outside the village that afternoon, and some suspicion rested on them. The mother went so far in her wild grief as to think it possible that Raicharan himself had stolen the child. She called him aside with piteous entreaty and said: "Raicharan, give me back my baby. Ohl give me back my child. Take from me any money you ask, but give me back my child!"

Raicharan only beat his forehead in reply. His mistress ordered him out of the house.

Anukul tried to reason his wife out of this wholly unjust suspicion:

"Why on earth," he said, "should he commit such a crime as that?"

The mother only replied: "The baby had gold ornaments on his body. Who knows?"

It was impossible to reason with her after that.

II

Raicharan went back to his own village. Up to this time he had had no son, and there was no hope that any child would now be born to him.

But it came about before the end of a year that his wife gave birth to a son and died.

An overwhelming resentment at first grew up in Raicharan's heart at the sight of this new baby. At the back of his mind was resentful suspicion that it had come as a usurper in place of the little Master. He also thought it would be a grave offence to be happy with a son of this own, after

what had happened to his master's little child. Indeed, if it had not been for a widowed sister, who mothered the new baby, it would not have lived long.

But a change gradually came over Raicharan's mind. A wonderful thing happened. This new baby in turn began to crawl about, and cross the doorway with mischief in its face. It also showed an amusing cleverness in making its escape to safety. Its voice, its sounds of laughter and tears, its gestures, were those of the little Master. On some days, when Raicharan listened to its crying, his heart suddenly began thumping wildly against his ribs, and it seemed to him that his former little Master was crying somewhere in the unknown land of death because he had lost his Chan-na.

Phailna (for that was the name Raicharan's sister gave to the new baby) soon began to talk. It learnt to say Ba-ba and Ma-ma with a baby accent. When Raicharan heard those familiar sounds the mystery suddenly became clear. The little Master could not cast off the spell of his Chan-na and therefore he had been reborn in his own house.

The arguments in favour of this were, to Raicharan, altogether beyond dispute;

(i) The new baby was born soon after his little Master's death.

(ii) His wife could never have accumulated such merit as to give birth to a son in middle age.

(iii) The new baby walked with a toddle and called out Ba-ba and Mama. There was no sign lacking which marked out the future judge.

Then suddenly Raicharan remembered that terrible accusation of the mother. "Ah," he said to himself with amazement, "the mother's heart was right. She knew I had stolen her child." When once he had come to this conclusion, he was filled with remorse for his past neglect. he now gave himself over, body and soul, to the new baby, and became its devoted attendant. He began to bring it up, as if it were the son of a rich man. He bought a go-cart, a yellow satin waistcoat, and a gold-embroidered cap. He melted down the ornaments of his dead wife, and made gold bangles and anklets. He refused to let the little child play with any one of the neighbourhood, and became himself its sole companion day and night. As the baby grew up to boyhood, he was so petted and spoilt and clad in such finery that the village children would call him "Your Lordship," and jeer at him; and older people regarded Raicharan as unaccountably crazy about the child.

At last the time came for the boy to go to school. Raicharan sold his small piece of land, and went to Calcutta. There he got employment with great difficulty as a servant, and sent Phailna to school. He spared no pains to give him the best education, the best clothes, the best food. Meanwhile he lived himself on a mere handful of rice, and would say in secret: "Ah! my little Master, my dear little Master, you loved me so much that you came back to my house. You shall never suffer from any neglect of mine."

Twelve years passed away in this manner. The boy was able to read and write well. He was bright and healthy and good-looking. He paid a great deal of attention to his personal appearance, and was specially careful in parting his hair. He was inclined to extravagance and finery, and spent money freely. He could never quite look on Raicharan as a father, because, though fatherly in affection, he had the manner of a servant. A further fault was this, that Raicharan kept secret from every one that he himself was the father of the child.

The students of the hostel, where Phailna was a boarder, were greatly amused by Raicharan's country manners, and I have to confess that behind his father's back Phailna joined in their fun. But, in the bottom of their hearts, all the students loved the innocent and tender-hearted old man, and Phailna was very fond of him also. But, as I have said before, he loved him with a kind of condescension.

Raicharan grew older and older, and his employer was continually finding fault with him for his incompetent work. He had been starving himself for the boy's sake. So he had grown physically weak, and no longer up to his work. He would forget things, and his mind became dull and stupid. But his employer expected a full servant's work out of him, and would not brook excuses. The money that Raicharan had brought with him from the sale of his land was exhausted. The boy was continually grumbling about his clothes, and asking for more money.

III

Raicharan made up his mind. He gave up the situation where he was working as a servant, and left some money with Phailna and said: "I have some business to do at home in my village, and shall be back soon."

He went off at once to Baraset where Anukul was magistrate. Anukul's wife was still broken down with grief. She had had no other child.

One day Anukul was resting after a long and weary day in court. His wife was buying, at an exorbitant price, a herb from a mendicant quack, which was said to ensure the birth of a child. A voice of greeting was heard in the courtyard. Anukul went out to see who was there. It was Raicharan. Anukul's heart was softened when he saw his old servant. He asked him many questions and offered to take him back into service.

Raicharan smiled faintly, and said in reply: "I want to made obeisance to my mistress."

Anukul went with Raicharan into the house, where the mistress did not receive him as warmly as his old master. Raicharan took no notice of this, but folded his hands, and said: "It was not the Padma that stole your baby. It was I."

Anukul exclaimed: "Great God! Eh! What! Where is he?"

Raicharan replied: "He is with me. I will bring him the clay after tomorrow."

It was Sunday. There was no magistrate's court sitting. Both husband and wife were looking expectantly along the road, waiting from early morning for Raicharan's appearance. At ten o'clock he came, leading Phailna by the hand.

Anukul's wife, without a question, took the. boy into her lap, and was wild with excitement, sometimes laughing, sometimes weeping touching him, kissing his hair and his forehead, and gazing into his face with hungry, eager eyes. The boy was very good-looking and dressed like a gentleman's son. The heart of Anukul brimmed over with a sudden rush of affection.

Nevertheless the magistrate in him asked: "Have you any proofs?"

Raicharan said: "How could there be any proof of such a deed? God alone knows that I stole your boy, and no one else in the world."

When Anukul saw how eagerly his wife was clinging to the boy, he realised the futility of asking for proofs. It would be wiser to believe. And then-where could an old man like Raicharan get such a boy from? And why should his faithful servant deceive him for nothing?

"But," he added severely, "Raicharan, you must not stay here."

"Where shall I go, Master?" said Raicharan, in a choking voice, folding his hands; "I am old. Who will take in an old man as, servant?"

The mistress said: "Let him stay. My child will be pleased. I forgive him."

But Anukul's magisterial conscience would not allow him "No," he said, "he cannot be forgiven for what he has done."

Raicharan bowed to the ground, and clasped Anukul's feet- "Master," he cried, "let me stay. It was not 1 who did it. It was GOD."

Anukul's conscience was worse stricken than ever, when Raicharan tried to put the blame on God's shoulders.

"No," he said, "I could not allow it. I cannot trust you anymore. You have done an act of treachery."

Raicharan rose to his feet and said: "It was not I who did it."

"Who was it then?" asked Anukul.

Raicharan replied: "It was my fate."

But no educated man could take this for an excuse. Anukul remained obdurate.

When Phailna saw that he was the wealthy magistrate's son, and not Raicharan's, he was angry at first, thinking that he had been cheated all this time of his birthright. But seeing Raicharan in distress, he generously said to his father: "Father, forgive him. Even if you don't let him live with us, let him have a small monthly pension."

After hearing this, Raicharan did not utter another word. He looked for the last time on the face of his son; he made obeisance to his old master and mistress. Then he went out, and was mingled with the numberless people of the world.

At the end of the month Anukul sent him some money to his village. But the money came back. There was no one there of the name of Raicharan.

The Kingdom of Cards

I

ONCE upon a time there was a lonely island in a distant sea where lived the Kings and Queens, the Aces and the Knaves, in the Kingdom of Cards. The Tens and Nines, with the Twos and Threes, and all the other members, had long ago settled there also. But these were not twice-born people, like the famous Court Cards.

The Ace, the King, and the Knave were the three highest castes. The fourth caste was made up of a mixture of the lower Cards. The Twos and Threes were lowest of all. These inferior Cards were never allowed to sit in the same row with the great Court Cards.

Wonderful indeed were the regulations and rules of that island kingdom. The particular rank of each individual had been settled from time immemorial. Every one had his own appointed work, and never did anything else. An unseen hand appeared to be directing them wherever they went,-according to the Rules.

No one in the Kingdom of Cards had any occasion to think: no one had any need to come to any decision: no one was ever required to debate any new subject. The citizens all moved along in a listless groove without speech. When they fell, they made no noise. They lay down on their backs, and gazed upward at the sky with each prim feature firmly fixed for ever.

There was a remarkable stillness in the Kingdom of cards. Satisfaction and contentment were complete in all their rounded wholeness. There was never any uproar or violence. There was never any excitement or enthusiasm.

The great ocean, crooning its lullaby with one unceasing melody, lapped the island to sleep with a thousand soft touches of its wave's white hands. The vast sky, like the outspread azure wings of the brooding mother-bird, nestled the island round with its downy plume. For on the distant horizon a deep blue line betokened another shore. But no sound of quarrel or strife could reach the Island of Cards, to break its calm repose.

II

In that far-off foreign land across the sea, there lived a young Prince whose mother was a sorrowing queen. This queen had fallen from favour, and was living with her only son on the seashore. The Prince passed his childhood alone and forlorn, sitting by his forlorn mother, weaving the net of his big desires. He longed to go in search of the Flying Horse, the Jewel in the Cobra's hood, the Rose of Heaven, the Magic Roads, or to find where the Princess Beauty was sleeping in the ogre's castle over the thirteen rivers and across the seven seas.

From the Son of the Merchant at school the young Prince learnt the stories of foreign kingdoms. From the Son of the Kotwal he learnt the adventures of the Two Genii of the Lamp. And when the rain came beating down, and the clouds covered the sky, he would sit on the threshold facing the sea, and say to his sorrowing mother: "Tell me, mother, a story of some very far-off land."

And his mother would tell him an endless tale she had heard in her childhood of a wonderful country beyond the sea where dwelt the Princess Beauty. And the heart of the young Prince would become sick with longing, as he sat on the threshold, looking out on the ocean, listening to his mother's wonderful story while the rain outside came beating down and the grey clouds covered the sky.

One day the Son of the Merchant came to the Prince, and said boldly: "Comrade, my studies are over. I am now setting out on my traveis to seek my fortunes on the sea. I have come to bid you good-bye." The Prince said: "I will go with you." And the Son of Kotwal said also: "Comrades, trusty and true, you will not leave me behind. I also will be your companion."

Then the young Prince said to his sorrowing mother: "Mother, I am now setting out on my travels to seek my fortune. When I come back once more, I shall surely have found some way to remove all your sorrow."

So the Three Companions set out on their travels together. In the harbour. were anchored the twelve ships of the merchant, and the Three Companions got on board. The south wind was blowing, and the twelve ships sailed away. as fast as the desires which rose in the Prince's breast.

At the Conch Shell Island they filled one ship with conches. At the Sandal Wood Island they filled a second ship with sandal-wood, and at the Coral Island they filled a third ship with coral.

Four years passed away, and they filled four more ships, one with ivory, one with musk, one with cloves, and one with nutmegs.

But when these ships were all loaded a terrible tempest arose. The ships were all of them sunk, with their cloves and nutmeg, and musk and ivory, and coral and sandal-wood and conches. But the ship with the Three Companions struck on an island reef, hurled them safe ashore, and itself broke in pieces.

This was the famous Island of Cards, where lived the Ace and King and Queen and Knave, with the Nines and Tens and all the other members-according to the Rules.

III

Up till now there had been nothing to disturb that island stillness. No new thing had ever happened. No discussion had ever been held.

And then, of a sudden, the Three Companions appeared,

thrown up by the sea; and the Great Debate began. There were three main points of dispute.

First, to what caste should these unclassed strangers belong? Should they rank with the Court Cards? Or were they merely lower-caste people, to be ranked with the Nines and Tens? No precedent could be quoted to decide this weighty question.

Secondly, what was their clan? Had they the fairer hue and bright complexion of the Hearts, or was theirs the darker complexion of the Clubs? Over this question there were interminable disputes. The whole marriage system of the island, with its intricate regulations, would depend on its nice adjustment.

Thirdly, what food should they take? With whom should they live and sleep? And should their heads be placed south-west, north-west, or only north-east? In all the Kingdom of Cards a series of problems so vital and critical had never been debated before.

But the Three Companions grew desperately hungry. They had to get food in some way or other. So while this debate went on, with its interminable silence and pauses, and while the Aces called their own meeting, and formed themselves into a Committee, to find some obsolete dealing with the question, the Three Companions themselves were eating all they could find, and drinking out of every vessel, and breaking all regulations.

Even the Twos and Threes were shocked at this outrageous behaviour. The Threes said: "Brother Twos, these people are openly shameless!" And the Twos said: "Brother Threes, they are evidently of lower caste than ourselves!"

After their meal was over, the Three Companions went for a stroll in the city.

When they saw the ponderous people moving in their dismal processions with prim and solemn faces, the Prince turned to the Son of the Merchant and the Son of the Kotwal, and threw back his head, and gave one stupendous laugh.

Down Royal Street and across Ace Square and along the Knave Embankment the quiver of this strange, unheard-of laughter, the laughter that, amazed at itself, expired in the vast vacuum of silence.

The Son of the Kotwal and the Son of the Merchant were chilled through to the bone by the ghost-like stillness around them they turned to the Prince, and said: "Comrade, let us go away. Let us not stop for a moment in this awful land of ghosts."

But the Prince said: "Comrades, these people resemble men, so I am going to find out, by shaking them upside down and outside in, whether they have a single drop of warm living blood left in their veins."

IV

The days passed one by one, and the placid existence of the Island went on almost without a ripple. The Three Companions obeyed no rules nor regulations. They never did anything correctly either in sitting or standing or turning themselves round or lying on their back. On the contrary, wherever they saw these things going on precisely and exactly according to the Rules, they gave way to inordinate laughter. They remained unimpressed altogether by the eternal gravity of those eternal regulations.

One day the great Court Cards came to the Son of the Kotwal and the Son of the Merchant and the Prince.

"Why," they asked slowly, "are you not moving according to the Rules?"

The Three Companions answered: "Because that is our *Ichcha* (wish)."

The great Court Cards with hollow, cavernous voices, as if slowly awakening from an age-long dream, said together: "*Ich-cha!* And pray who is *Ich-cha?*"

They could not understand who *Ichcha* was then, but the whole island was to understand it by-and-by.

The first glimmer of light passed the threshold of their minds when they found out, through watching the actions of the Prince, that they might move in a straight line in an opposite direction from the one in which they had always gone before. Then they made another startling discovery, that there was another side to the Cards which they had never yet noticed with attention. This was the beginning of the change.

Now that the change had begun, the Three Companions were able to initiate them more and more deeply into the mysteries of *Ichcha.* The Cards gradually became aware that life was not bound by regulations. They began to feel a secret satisfaction in the kingly power of choosing for themselves.

But with this first impact of *Ichcha* the whole pack of cards began to totter slowly, and then tumble down to the ground. The scene was like that of some huge python awaking from a long sleep, as it slowly unfolds its numberless coils with a quiver that runs through its whole frame.

V

Hitherto the Queens of Spades and Clubs and Diamonds and Hearts had remained behind curtains with eyes that gazed vacantly into space, or else remained fixed upon the ground.

And now, all of a sudden, on an afternoon in spring the Queen of Hearts from the balcony raised her dark eyebrows for a moment, and cast a single glance upon the Prince from the corner of her eye.

"Great God," cried the Prince, "I thought they were all painted images. But I am wrong. They are women after all."

Then the young Prince called to his side his two Companions, and said in a meditative voice: "My comrades! There is a charm about these ladies that I never noticed before. When I saw that glance of the Queen's dark, luminous eyes, brightening with new emotion, it seemed to me like the first faint streak of dawn in a newly created world."

The two Companions smiled a knowing smile, and said: "Is that really so, Prince?"

And the poor Queen of Hearts from that day went from bad to worse. She began to forget all rules in a truly scandalous manner. If, for instance, her place in the row was beside the Knave, she suddenly found herself quite accidentally standing beside the Prince instead. At this, the Knave, with motionless face and solemn voice, would say: "Queen, you have made a mistake."

And the poor Queen of Hearts' red cheeks would get redder than ever. But the Prince would come gallantly to her rescue and say: "No! There is no mistake. From to-day I am going to be Knave!"

Now it came to pass that, while every one was trying to correct the improprieties of the guilty Queen of Hearts, they began to make mistakes themselves. The Aces found themselves elbowed out by the Kings. The Kings got muddled up with the Knaves. The Nines and Tens assumed airs as though they belonged to the Great Court Cards. The Twos and Threes were found secretly taking the places specially reserved for the Fours and Fives. Confusion had never been so confounded before.

Many spring seasons had come and gone in that Island of Cards. The Kokil, the bird of Spring, had sung its song year after year. But it had never stirred the blood as it stirred it now. In days gone by the sea had sung its tireless melody. But, then, it had proclaimed only the inflexible monotony of the Rule. And suddenly its waves were telling, through all their flashing light and luminous shade and myriad voices, the deepest yearnings of the heart of love!

VI

Where are vanished now their prim, round, regular, complacent features? Here is a face full of love-sick longing. Here is a heart beating wild with regrets. Here is a mind racked sore with doubts. Music and sighing, and smiles and tears, are filling the air. Life is throbbing; hearts are breaking; passions are kindling.

Every one is now thinking of his own appearance, and comparing himself with others. The Ace of Clubs is musing to himself that the King of Spades may be just passably good-looking. "But," says he, "when I walk down the street you have only to see how people's eyes turn towards me." The King of Spades is saying: " Why on earth is that Ace of Clubs always straining his neck and strutting about like a peacock? He imagines all the Queens are dying of love for him, while the real fact is-" Here he pauses, and examines his face in the glass.

But the Queens were the worst of all. They began to spend all their time in dressing themselves up to the Nines. And the Nines would become their hopeless and abject slaves. But their cutting remarks about one another were more shocking still.

So the young men would sit listless on the leaves under the trees, lolling with outstretched limbs in the forest shade. And the young maidens, dressed in pale-blue robes, would come walking accidentally to the same shade of the same forest by the same trees, and turn their eyes as though they saw no one there, and look as though they came out to see nothing at all. And then one young man more forward than the rest in a fit of madness would dare to go near to a maiden in blue. But, as he drew near, speech would forsake him. He would stand there tongue-tied and foolish, and the favourable moment would pass.

The Kokil birds were singing in the boughs overhead. The mischievous South wind was blowing; it disarrayed the hair, it whispered in the ear, and stirred the music in the blood. The leaves of the trees were murmuring with rustling delight. And the ceaseless sound of the ocean made all the mute longings of the heart of man and maid surge backwards and forwards on the full springtide of love.

The Three Companions had brought into the dried-up channels of the Kingdom of Cards the full flood-tide of a new life.

VII

And, though the tide was full, there was a pause as though the rising waters would not break into foam but remain suspended for ever. There were no outspoken words, only a cautious going forward one step and receding two. All seemed busy heaping up their unfulfilled desires, like castles in the air, or fortresses of sand. They were pale and speechless, their eyes were burning, their lips trembling with unspoken secrets.

The Prince saw what was wrong. He summoned every one on the Island and said: "Bring hither the flutes and the cymbals, the pipes and drums. Let all be played together, and raise loud shouts of rejoicing. For the Queen of Hearts this very night is going to choose her Mate!"

So the Tens and Nines began to blow on their flutes and pipes; the Eights and Sevens played on their sackbuts and viols; and even the Twos and Threes began to beat madly on their drums.

When this tumultuous gust of music came, it swept away at one blast all these sighings and mopings. And then what a torrent of laughter and words poured forth! There were daring proposals and mocking refusals, and gossip and chatter, and jests and merriment. It was like the swaying and

shaking, and rustling and soughing, in a summer gale, of a million leaves and branches in the depth-of the primeval forest

But the Queen of Hearts, in a rose-red robe, sat silent in the shadow of her secret bower, and listened to the great uproarious sound of music and mirth that came floating towards her. She shut her eyes, and dreamt her dream of love. And when she opened them she found the Prince seated on the ground before her gazing up at her face. And she covered her eyes with both hands, and shrank back quivering with an inward tumult of joy.

And the Prince passed the whole day alone, walking by the side of the surging sea. He carried in his mind that startled look, that shrinking gesture of the Queen, and his heart beat high with hope.

That night the serried, gaily-dressed ranks of young men and maidens waited with smiling faces at the Palace Gates. The Palace Hall was lighted with fairy lamps and festooned with the flowers of spring. Slowly the Queen of Hearts entered, and the whole assembly rose to greet her. With a jasmine garland in her hand, she stood before the Prince with downcast eyes. In her lowly bashfulness she could hardly raise the garland to the neck of the mate she had chosen. But the Prince bowed his head, and the garland slipped to its place. The assembly of youths and maidens had waited her choice with eager, expectant hush. And when the choice was made, the. whole vast concourse rocked and swayed with a tumult of wild delight. And the sound of their shouts was heard in every part of the Island, and by ships far out at sea. Never had such a shout been raised in the Kingdom of Cards before.

And they carried the Prince and his Bride, and seated them on the throne, and crowned them then and there in the Ancient Island of Cards.

And the sorrowing Mother Queen, on the far-off island shore on the other side of the sea, came sailing to her son's new kingdom in a ship adorned with gold.

And the citizens are no longer regulated according to the Rules, but are good or bad, or both, according to their *Ichcha.*

The Devotee

I

AT a time when my unpopularity with a part of my readers had reached the nadir of its glory, and my name had become the central orb of the journals, to be attended through space with a perpertual rotation of revilement, I felt the necessity to retire to some quiet place and endeavour to forget my own existence.

I have a house in the country some miles away from Calcutta, where I can remain unknown and unmolested. The villagers there have not, as yet, come to any conclusion about me. They know I am no mere holidaymaker or pleasure-seeker; for I never outrage the silence of the village nights with the riotous noises of the city. Nor do they regard me as an ascetic, because the little acquaintance they have of me carries the savour of comfort about it. I am not, to them a traveller; for, though I am a vagabond by nature, my wandering through the village fields is aimless. They are hardly even quite certain whether I am married or single; for they have never seen me with my children. So, not being able to classify me in any animal or vegetable kingdom that they know, they have long since given me up and left me stolidly alone.

But quite lately I have come to know that there is one person in the village who is deeply interested in me. Our acquaintance began on a sultry afternoon in July. There had been rain all the morning, and the air was still wet and heavy with mist, like eyelids when weeping is over.

I sat lazily watching a dappled cow grazing on the high bank of the river. The afternoon sun was playing on her glossy hide. The simple beauty of this dress of light made me wonder idly at man's deliberate waste of money in setting up tailors' shops to deprive his own skin of its natural clothing.

While I was thus watching and lazily musing, a woman of middle age came and prostrated herself before me, touching the ground with her forehead. She carried in her robe some bunches of flowers, one of which she offered to me with folded hands. She said to me, as she offered it: "This is an offering to my God."

She went away. I was so taken aback as she uttered these words, that I could hardly catch a glimpse of her before she was gone. The whole incident was entirely simple, but it left a deep impression on my mind; and as I turned back once more to look at the cattle in the field, the zest of life in the cow, who was munching the lush grass with deep breaths, while she whisked off the flies, appeared to me fraught with mystery. My readers may laugh at my foolishness, but my heart was full of adoration. I offered my worship to the pure joy of living, which is God's own life. Then, plucking a tender shoot from the mango tree, I fed the cow with it from my own hand, and as I did this I had the satisfaction of having pleased my God.

The next year when I returned to the village it was February. The cold season still lingered on. The morning sun came into my room, and I was grateful for its warmth. I was writing, when the servant came to tell me that a devotee, of the Vishnu cult, wanted to see me. I told him, in an absent way, to bring her upstairs, and went on with my writing. The Devotee came in, and bowed to me, touching my feet. I found that she was the same woman whom I had met, for a brief moment, a year ago.

I was able now to examine her more closely. She was past that age when one asks the question whether a woman is beautiful or not. Her stature was above the ordinary height, and she was strongly built; but her body was slightly bent owing to her constant attitude of veneration. Her manner had nothing shrinking about it. The most remarkable of her features were her two eyes. They seemed to have a penetrating power which could make distance near.

With those two large eyes of hers, she seemed to push me as she entered.

"What is this?" she asked. "Why have you brought me here before your throne, my God? I used to see you among the trees; and that was much better. That was the true place to meet you."

She must have seen me walking in the garden without my seeing her. For the last few days, however, I had suffered from a cold, and had been prevented from going out. I had, perforce, to stay indoors and pay my homage to the evening sky from my terrace. After a silent pause the Devotee said to me: "0 my God, give me some words of good."

I was quite unprepared for this abrupt request, and answered her on the spur of the moment: "Good words I neither give nor receive. I simply open my eyes and keep silence, and then I can at once both hear and see, even when no sound is uttered. Now, while I am looking at you, it is as good as listening to your voice."

The Devotee became quite excited as I spoke, and exclaimed: "God speaks to me, not only with His mouth, but with His whole body."

I said to her: "When I am silent I can listen with my whole body. I have come away from Calcutta here to listen to that sound."

The Devotee said: "Yes, I know that, and therefore I have come here to sit by you."

Before taking her leave, she again bowed to me, and touched my feet. I could see that she was distressed, because my feet were covered. She wished them to be bare.

Early next morning I came out, and sat on my terrace on the roof. Beyond the line of trees southward I could see the open country, chill and desolated. I could watch the sun rising over the sugar-cane in the East, beyond the clump of trees at the side of the village. Out of the deep shadow of those dark trees the village road suddenly appeared. It stretched forward, winding its way to some distant villages on the horizon, till it was lost in the grey of the mist.

That morning it was difficult to say whether the sun had risen or not. A white fog was still clinging to the tops of the trees. I saw the Devotee walking through the blurred dawn, like a mist-wraith of the morning twilight. She was singing her chant to God, and sounding her cymbals.

The thick haze lifted at last; and the sun, like the kindly grandsire of the village, took his seat amid all the work that was going on in home and field.

When I had just settled down at my writing-table, to appease the hungry appetite of my editor in Calcutta, there came a sound of footsteps on the stair, and the Devotee, humming a tune to herself, entered, and bowed before me. I lifted my head from my papers.

She said to me: "My God, yesterday I took as sacred food what was left over from your meal."

I was startled, and asked her how she could do that.

"Oh," she said, "I waited at your door in the evening, while you were at dinner, and took some food from your plate when it was carried out."

This was a surprise to me, for every one in the village knew that I had been to Europe, and had eaten with Europeans. I was a vegetarian, no doubt, but the sanctity of my cook would not bear investigation, and the orthodox regarded my food as polluted.

The Devotee, noticing my sign of surprise, said: "My God, why should I come to you at all, if I could not take your food?"

I asked her what her own caste people would say. She told me she had already spread the news far and wide all over the village. The caste people had shaken their heads, but agreed that she must go her own way,

I found out that the Devotee came from a good family in the country, and that her mother was well-to-do, and desired to keep her daughter. But she preferred to be a mendicant. I asked her how she made her living. She told me that her followers had given her a piece of land, and that she begged her food from door to door. She said to me: "The food which I get by begging is divine."

After I had thought over what she said, I understood her meaning. When we get our food precariously as alms, we remember God the giver.

But when we receive our food regularly at home, as a matter of course, we are apt to regard it as ours by right.

I had a great desire to ask her about her husband. But as she never mentioned him even indirectly, I did not question her.

I found out very soon that the Devotee had no respect at all for that part of the village where the people of the higher castes lived.

"They never give," she said, "a single farthing to God's service; and yet they have the largest share of God's glebe. But the poor worship and starve."

I asked her why she did not go and live among these godless people, and help them towards a better life. "That," I said with some unction, "would be the highest form of divine worship."

I had heard sermons of this kind from time to time, and I am rather fond of copying them myself for the public benefit, when the chance comes.

But the Devotee was not at all impressed. She raised her big round eyes, and looked straight into mine, and said:

"You mean to say that because God is with the sinners, therefore when you do them any service you do it to God? Is that so?"

"Yes," I replied, "that is my meaning." "Of course," she answered almost impatiently, "of course, God is with them: otherwise, how could they go on living at all? But what is that to me? My God is not there. My God cannot be worshipped among them; because I do not find Him there. I seek Him where I can find Him."

As she spoke, she made obeisance to me. What she meant to say was really this. A mere doctrine of God's omnipresence does not help us. That God is all-pervading; this truth may be a mere intangible abstraction, and therefore unreal to ourselves. Where I can see Him, there is His reality in my soul.

I need not explain that all the while she showered her devotion on me she did it to me not as an individual. I was simply a vehicle of her divine worship. It was not for me either to receive it or to refuse it: for it was not mine, but God's.

When the Devotee came again, she found me once engaged with my books and papers.

"What have you been doing," she said, with evident vexation, "that my God should make you undertake such drudgery? Whenever I come, I find you reading and writing."

"God keeps his useless people busy," I answered; "otherwise they would be bound to get into mischief. They have to do all the least necessary things in life. It keeps them out of trouble."

The Devotee told me that she could not bear the encumbrances, with which, day by day, I was surrounded. If she wanted to see me, she was not allowed by the servants to come straight upstairs. If she wanted to touch my feet in worship, there were my socks always in the way. And when she wanted to have a simple talk with me, she found my mind lost in a wilderness of letters.

This time, before she left me, she folded her hands, and said: "My God! I felt your feet in my breast this morning. Oh, how cool! And they were bare, not covered. I held them upon my head for a long time in worship. That filled my very being. Then, after that, pray what was the use of my coming to you yourself? Why did I come? My Lord, tell me truly,-wasn't it a mere infatuation?"

There were some flowers in my vase on the table. While she was there, the gardener brought some new flowers to put in their place. The Devotee saw him changing them.

"Is that all?" she exclaimed. "Have you done with the flowers? Then give them to me."

She held the flowers tenderly in the cup of her hands, and began to gaze at them with bent head. After a few moments' silence she raised her head again, and said to me: "You never look at these flowers; therefore they become stale to you. If you would only look into them, then your r reading and writing would go to the winds."

She tied the flowers together in the end of her robe, and placed them, in an attitude of worship, on the top of her head, saying reverently. "Let me carry my God with me."

While she did this, I felt that flowers in our rooms do not receive their due need of loving care at our hands. When we stick them in vases, they are more like a row of naughty schoolboys standing on a form to be punished.

The Devotee came again the same evening, and sat by my feet on the terrace of the roof.

"I gave away those flowers," she said, "as I went from house to house this morning, singing God's name. Beni, the head man of our village, laughed at me for my devotion, and said: 'Why do you waste all this devotion on Him? Don't you know He is reviled up and down the countryside?' Is that true, my God? Is it true that they are hard upon you?"

For a moment I shrank into myself. It was a shock to find that the stains of printers' ink could reach so far.

The Devotee went on: "Beni imagined that he could blow out the flame of my devotion at one breath. But this is no mere tiny flame: it is a burning fire. Why do they abuse you, my God?"

I said: "Because I deserved it. I suppose in my greed I was loitering about to steal people's hearts in secret."

The Devotee said: "Now you see for yourself how little their hearts are worth. They are full of poison, and this will cure you of your greed." "When a man," I answered, "has greed in his heart, he is always on the verge of being beaten. The greed itself supplies his enemies with poison."

"Our merciful God," she replied, "beats us with His own hand, and drives away all the poison. He who endures God's beating to the end is saved."

II

That evening the Devotee told me the story of her life. The stars of evening rose and set behind the trees, as she went on to the end of her tale.

"My husband is very simple. Some people think that he is a simpleton; but I know that those who understand simply, understand truly. In business and household management he was able to hold his own.

Because his needs were small, and his wants few, he could manage carefully on what we had. He would never meddle in other matters, nor try to understand them.

"Both my husband's parents died before we had been married long, and we were left alone. But my husband always needed some one to be over him. I am ashamed to confess that he had a sort of reverence for me, and looked upon me as his superior. But I am sure that he could understand things better than I, though I had greater powers of talking.

"Of all the people in the world he held his Guru Thakur (spiritual master) in the highest veneration. Indeed it was not veneration merely but love; and such love as his is rare.

"Guru Thakur was younger than my husband. Ohl how beautiful he was.

"My husband had played games with him when he was a boy; and from that time forward he had dedicated his heart and soul to this friend of his early days. Thakur knew how simple my husband was, and used to tease him mercilessly.

"He and his comrades would play jokes upon him for their own amusement; but he would bear them all with long suffering.

"When I married into this family, Guru Thakur was studying at Benares. My husband used to pay all his expenses. I was eighteen years old when he returned home to our village.

"At the age of fifteen I had my child. I was so young I did not know how to take care of him. I was fond of gossip, and liked to be with my village friends for hours together. I used to get quite cross with my boy when I was compelled to stay at home and nurse him. Alas! my child-God came into my life, but His playthings were not ready for Him. He came to the mother's heart, but the mother's heart lagged behind. He left me in anger; and ever since I have been searching for Him up and down the world.

"The boy was the joy of his father's life. My careless neglect used to pain my husband. But his was a mute soul. He has never been able to give expression to his pain.

"The wonderful thing was this, that in spite of my neglect the child used to love me more than any one else. He seemed to have the dread that I would one day go away and leave him. So even when I was with him, he would watch me with a restless look in his eyes. He had me very little to himself, and therefore his desire to be with me was always painfully eager. When I went each day to the river, he used to fret and stretch out his little arms to be taken with me. But the bathing ghat was my place for meeting my friends, and I did not care to burden myself with the child.

"It was an early morning in August. Fold after fold of grey clouds had wrapped the midday round with a wet clinging robe. I asked the maid to take care of the boy, while I went down to the river. The child cried after me as I went away.

"There was no one there at the bathing *ghat* when I arrived. As a swimmer, I was the best among all the village women. The river was quite full with the rains. I swam out into the middle of the stream some distance from the shore.

"Then I heard a cry from the bank, 'Mother!' I turned my head and saw my boy coming down the steps, calling me as he came. I shouted to him to stop, but he went on, laughing and calling. My feet and hands became cramped with fear. I shut my eyes, afraid to see. When I opened them, there, at the. slippery stairs, my boy's ripple of laughter had disappeared for ever.

"I got back to the shore. I raised him from the water. I took him in my arms, my boy, my darling, who had begged so often in vain for me to take him. I took him now, but he no more looked in my eyes and called 'Mother.'

"My child-God had come. I had ever neglected Him. I had ever made Him cry. And now all that neglect began to beat against my own heart, blow upon blow, blow upon blow. When my boy was with me, I had left him alone. I had refused to take him with me. And now, when he is dead, his memory clings to me and never leaves me.

"God alone knows all that my husband suffered. If he had only punished me for my sin, it would have been better for us both. But he knew only how to endure in silence, not how to speak.

"When I was almost mad with grief, Guru Thakur came back. In earlier days, the relation between him and my husband had been that of boyish friendship. Now, my husband's reverence for his sanctity and learning was unbounded. He could hardly speak in his presence, his awe of him was so great.

"My husband asked his Guru to try to give me some consolation. Guru Thakur began to read and explain to me the scriptures. But I do not think they had much effect on my mind. All their value for me lay in the voice that uttered them. God makes the draught of divine life deepest in the heart for man to drink, through the human voice. He has no better vessel in His hand than that; and He Himself drinks His divine draught out of the same vessel.

"My husband's love and veneration for his Guru filled our house, as incense fills a temple shrine. I showed that veneration, and had peace. I saw my God in the form of that Guru. He used to come to take his meal at our house every morning. The first thought that would come to my mind on waking from sleep was that of his food as a sacred gift from God. When I prepared the things for his meal, my fingers would sing for joy.

"When my husband saw my devotion to his Guru, his respect for me greatly increased. He noticed his Guru's eager desire to explain the scriptures to me. He used to think that

he could never expect to earn any regard from his Guru himself, on account of his stupidity; but his wife had made up for it.

"Thus another five years went by happily, and my whole life would have passed like that; but beneath the surface some stealing was going on somewhere in secret. I could not detect it; but it was detected by the God of my heart. Then came a day when, in a moment, our whole life was turned upside down.

"It was a morning in midsummer. I was returning home from bathing, my clothes all wet, down a shady lane. At the bend of the road, under the mango tree, I met my Guru Thakur. He had his towel on his shoulder and was repeating some Sanskrit verses as he was going to take his bath. With my wet clothes clinging all about me I was ashamed to meet him. I tried to pass by quickly, and avoid being seen. He called me by my name.

"I stopped, lowering my eyes, shrinking into myself. He fixed his gaze upon me, and said: 'How beautiful is your body!'

"All the universe of birds seemed to break into song in the branches overhead. All the bushes in the lane seemed ablaze with flowers. It was as though the earth and sky and everything had become a riot of intoxicating joy.

"I cannot tell how I got home. I only remember that I rushed into the room where we worship God. But the room seemed empty. Only before my eyes those same gold spangles of light were dancing which had quivered in front of me in that shady lane on my way back from the river.

"Guru Thakur came to take his food that day, and asked my husband where I had gone. He searched for me, but could not find me anywhere.

"Ah! I have not the same earth now any longer. The same sunlight is not mine. I called on my God in my dismay, and He kept His face turned away from me.

"The day passed, I know not how. That night I had to meet my husband. But the night is dark and silent. It is the time when my husband's mind comes out shining, like stars at twilight. I had heard him speak things in the dark, and I had been surprised to find how deeply he understood.

"Sometimes I am late in the evening in going to rest on account of household work. My husband waits for me, seated on the floor, without going to bed. Our talk at such times had often begun with something about our Guru.

"That night, when it was past midnight, I came to my room, and found my husband sleeping on the floor. Without disturbing him I lay down on the ground at his feet, my head towards him. Once he stretched his feet, while sleeping, and struck me on the breast. That was his last bequest.

"Next morning, when my husband woke up from his sleep, I was already sitting by him. Outside the widow, over the thick foliage of the jack-fruit tree, appeared the first pale red of the dawn at the fringe of the night. It was so early that the crows had not yet begun to call.

"I bowed, and touched my husband's feet with my forehead. He sat up, starting as if waking from a dream, and looked at my face in amazement. I said:

"I have made up my mind. I must leave the world. I cannot belong to you any longer. I must leave your home.'

"Perhaps my husband thought that he was still dreaming. He said not a word.

"'Ah! do hear me!' I pleaded with infinite pain. 'Do hear me and understand! You must marry another wife. I must take my leave.'

"My husband said: `What is all this wild, mad talk? Who advises you to leave the world?'

"I said: 'My Guru Thakur.'

"My husband looked bewildered. 'Guru Thakur!' he cried. 'When did he give you this advice?'

"'In the morning, 'I answered, 'yesterday, when I met him on my way back from the river.'

"His voice trembled a little. he turned, and looked in my face, and asked me: 'Why did he give you such a behest?'

"'I do not know,' I answered. 'Ask him! He will tell you himself, if he can.'

"My husband said: 'It is possible to leave the world, even when continuing to live in it. You need not leave my home. I will speak to my Guru about it.'

Vision

1

WHEN I was a very young wife, I gave birth to a dead child, and came near to death myself. I recovered strength very slowly, and my eyesight became weaker and weaker.

My husband at this time was studying medicine. He was not altogether sorry to have a chance of testing his medical knowledge on me. So he began to treat my eyes himself.

My elder brother was reading for his law examination. One day he came to see me, and was alarmed at my condition.

"What are you doing?" he said to my husband. "You are ruining Kumo's eyes. You ought to consult a good doctor at once."

My husband said irritably: "Why! what can a good doctor do more than I am doing? The case is quite a simple one, and the remedies are all well known."

Dada answered with scorn: "I suppose you think there is no difference between you and a Professor in your own Medical College."

My husband replied angrily: "If you ever get married, and there is a dispute about your wife's property, you won't take my advice about Law. Why, then, do you now come advising me about Medicine?"

While they were quarrelling, I was saying to myself that it was always the poor grass that suffered most when two kings went to war. Here was dispute going on between these two, and I had to bear the brunt of it.

It also seemed to me very unfair that, when my family had given me in marriage, they should interfere afterwards. After all, my pleasure and pain are my husband's concern, not theirs.

From that day forward, merely over this trifling matter of my eyes, the bond between my husband and Dada was strained.

To my surprise one afternoon, while my husband was away, Dada brought a doctor in to see me. He examined my eyes very carefully, and looked grave. He said that further neglect would be dangerous. He wrote out a prescription, and Dada sent for the medicine at once. When the strange doctor had gone, I implored my Dada not to interfere. I was sure that only evil would come from the stealthy visits of a doctor.

I was surprised at myself for plucking up courage to speak to my brother like that. I had always hitherto been afraid of him. I am sure also even in vanity?"

When Dacia came, I took him aside: "Dada, that treatment your doctor recommended would have done me a world of good; only unfortunately I mistook the mixture for the lotion. And since the day I made the mistake, my eyes have grown steadily worse; and now an operation is needed."

Dada said to me: "You were under your husband's treatment, and that is why I gave up coming to visit you."

"No," I answered. "In reality, I was secretly treating myself in accordance with your doctor's directions."

Oh! what lies we women have to tell! When we are mothers, we tell lies to pacify our children; and when we are wives, we tell lies to pacify the fathers of our children. We are never free from this necessity.

My deception had the effect of bringing about a better feeling between my husband and Dada. Dada blamed himself for asking me to keep a secret from my husband: and my husband regretted that he had not taken my brother's advice at the first.

At last, with the consent of both, an English doctor came and operated on my left eye. That eye, however, was too weak to bear the strain; and the last flickering glimmer of light went out. Then the other eye gradually lost itself in darkness.

One day my husband came to my bedside. "I cannot brazen it out before you any longer," said he; "Kunio, it is I who have ruined your eves."

I felt that his voice was choking with tears, and so I took up his right hand in both of mine and said: "Why! you did exactly what was right. You have dealt only with that which was your very own. Just imagine, if some strange doctor had come and taken away my eyesight. What consolation should I have had then? But now I can feel that all has happened for the best; and my great comfort is to know that it is at your hands I have lost my eyes. When Ramchandra found one lotus too few with which to worship God, he offered both his eyes in place of the lotus. And I have dedicated my eyes to my God. From now, whenever you see something that is a joy to you, then you must describe it to me; and I will feed upon your words as a sacred gift left over from your vision."

I do not mean, of course, that I said all this there and then, for it is impossible to speak these things on the spur of the moment. But I used to think over words like these for days and days together. And when I was very depressed, or if at any time the light of my devotion became dim, and I pitied my evil fate, then I made my mind utter these sentences, one by one, as a child repeats a story that is told. And so I could breathe once more the serener air of peace and love.

At the very time of our talk together, I said enough to show my husband what was in my heart.

"Kumo," he said to me, "the mischief I have done by my folly can never be made good. But I can do one thing I can ever remain by your side, and try to make up for your want of vision as much as is in my power."

"No" said I. "That will never do. I shall not ask you to turn your house into a hospital for the blind. There is only one thing to be done you, must marry again."

As I tried to explain to him that this was necessary, my voice broke a little. I coughed, and tried to hide my emotion, but he burst out saying:

"Kumo, I know I am a fool, and a braggart, and all that, But I am not a villain! If ever I marry again, I swear to you- I swear to you the most solemn oath by my family god, Gopinath-may that most hated of all sins, the sin of parricide, fall on my head!"

Ah! I should never, never have allowed him to swear that dreadful oath. But tears were choking my voice, and I could not say a word for insufferable joy. I hid my blind face in my pillows, and sobbed, and sobbed again. At last, when the first flood of my tears was over, I drew his head down to my breast.

"Ah!" said I, "why did you take such a terrible oath? Do you think I asked you to marry again for your own sordid pleasure? Not I was thinking of myself, for she could perform those services which were mine to give you when I had my sight."

"Services!" said he, "services! Those can be done by servants. Do you think I am mad enough to bring a slave into my house, and bid her share the throne with this my Goddess?"

As he said the word "Goddess," he held up my face in

his hands, and placed a kiss between my brows. At that moment the third eye of divine wisdom was opened, where he kissed me, and verily I had a consecration.

I said in my own mind: "It is well. I am no longer able to serve him in the lower world of household cares. But I shall rise to a higher region. I shall bring down blessings from above. No more lies! No more deceptions for me! All the littlenesses and hypocrisies of my former life shall be banished for ever!"

That day, the whole day through, I felt a conflict going on within me. The joy of the thought, that after this solemn oath it was impossible for my husband to marry again, fixed its roots deep in my heart, and I could not tear them out. But the new Goddess, who had taken her new throne in me, said: "The time might come when it would be good for your husband to break his oath and marry again." But the woman, who was within me, said: "That may be; but all the same an oath is an oath, and there is no way out." The Goddess, who was within me, answered: "That is no reason why you should exult over it." But the woman, who was within me, replied: "What you say is quite true, no doubt; all the same he has taken his oath." And the same story went on again and again. At last the Goddess frowned in silence, and the darkness of a horrible fear came down upon me.

My repentant husband would not let the servants do my work; he must do it all himself. At first it gave me unbounded delight to be dependent on him thus for every little thing. It was a means of keeping him by my side, and my desire to have him with me had become intense since my blindness. That share of his presence, which my eyes had lost, my other senses craved. When he was absent from my side, I would feel as if I were hanging in mid-air, and had lost my hold of all things tangible.

Formerly, when my husband came back late from the hospital, I used to open my window and gaze at the road. That road was the link which connected his world with mine. Now when I had lost that link through my blindness, all my body would go out to seek him. The bridge that united us had given way, and there was now this unsurpassable chasm. When he left my side the gulf seemed to yawn wide open. I could only wait for the time when he should cross back again from his own shore to mine.

But such intense longing and such utter dependence can never be good. A wife is a burden enough to a man, in all conscience, and to add to it the burden of this blindness was to make his life unbearable. I vowed that I would suffer alone, and never wrap my husband round in the folds of my all-pervading darkness.

Within an incredibly short space of time I managed to train myself to do all my household duties by the help of touch and sound and smell. In fact I soon found that I could get on with greater skill than before. For sight often distracts rather than helps us. And so it came to pass that, when these roving eyes of mine could do their work no longer, all the other senses took up their several duties with quietude and completeness.

When I had gained experience by constant practice, I would not let my husband do any more household duties for me. He complained bitterly at first that I was depriving him of his penance.

This did not convince me. Whatever he might say, I could feel that he had a real sense of relief when these household duties were over. To serve daily a wife who is blind can never make up the life of a man.

II

My husband at last had finished his medical course. He went away from Calcutta to a small town to practise as a doctor. There in the country I felt with joy, through all my blindness, that I was restored to the arms of my mother. I had left my village birthplace for Calcutta when I was eight years old. Since then ten years had passed away, and in the great city the memory of my village home had grown dim. As long as I had eyesight, Calcutta with its busy life screened from view the memory of my early days. But when I lost my eyesight I knew for the first time that Calcutta allured only the eyes: it could not fill the mind. And now, in my blindness, the scenes of my childhood shone out once more, like stars that appear one by one in the evening sky at the end of the day.

It was the beginning of November when we left Calcutta for Harsingpur. The place was new to me, but the scents and sounds of the countryside pressed round and embraced me. The morning breeze coming fresh from the newly ploughed land, the sweet and tender smell of the flowering mustard, the shepherd-boy's flute sounding in the distance, even the creaking noise of the bullock-cart, as it groaned over the broken village road, filled my world with delight. The memory of my past life, with all its ineffable fragrance and sound, became a living present to me, and my blind eyes could not tell me I was wrong. I went back, and lived over again my childhood. Only one thing was absent: my mother was not with me.

I could see my home with the large peepul trees growing along the edge of the village pool. I could picture in my mind's eye my old grandmother seated on the ground with her thin wisps of hair untied, warming her back in the sun as she made the little round lentil balls to be dried and used for cooking. But somehow I could not recall the songs she used to croon to herself in her weak and quavering voice. In the evening, whenever I heard the lowing of cattle, I could almost watch the figure of my mother going round the sheds with lighted lamp in her hand. The smell of the wet fodder and the pungent smoke of the straw fire would enter into my very heart. And in the distance I seemed to hear the clanging of the temple bell wafted up by the breeze from the river bank.

Calcutta, with all its turmoil and gossip, curdles the heart. There, all the beautiful duties of life lose their freshness and innocence. I remember one day, when a friend of mine came

in, and said to me: "Kumo, why don't you feel angry? If I had been treated like you by my husband, I would never look upon his face again."

She tried to make me indignant, because he had been so long calling in a doctor.

"My blindness," said I, "was itself a sufficient evil. Why should I make it worse by allowing hatred to grow up against my husband?"

My friend shook her head in great contempt, when she heard such old-fashioned talk from the lips of a mere chit of a girl. She went away in disdain. But whatever might be my answer at the time, such words as these left their poison; and the venom was never wholly got out of the soul, when once they had been uttered.

So you see Calcutta, with its never-ending gossip, does harden the heart. But when I came back to the country all my earlier hopes and faiths, all that I held true in life during childhood, became fresh and bright once more. God came to me, and filled my heart and my world. I bowed to Him, and said:

"It is well that Thou has taken away my eyes. Thou art with me."

Ah! But I said more than was right. It was a presumption to say: "Thou art with me." All we can say is this: "I must be true to Thee." Even when nothing is left for us, still we have to go on living.

III

We passed a few happy months together. My husband gained some reputation in his profession as a doctor. And money came with it.

But there is a mischief in money. I cannot point to any one event; but, because the blind have keener perceptions than other people, I could discern the change which came over my husband along with the increase of wealth.

He had a keen sense of justice when he was younger, and had often told me of his great desire to help the poor when once he obtained a practice of his own. He had a noble contempt for those in his profession who would not feel the pulse of a poor patient before collecting his fee. But now I noticed a difference. He had become strangely hard. Once when a poor woman came, and begged him, out of charity, to save the life of her only child, he bluntly refused. And when I implored him myself to help her, he did his work perfunctorily.

While we were less rich my husband disliked sharp practice in money matters. He was scrupulously honourable in such things. But since he had got a large account at the bank he was often closeted for hours with some scamp of a landlord's agent, for purposes which clearly boded no good.

Where has he drifted? What has become of this husband of mine,-the husband I knew before I was blind; the husband who kissed me that day between my brows, and enshrined me on the throne of a Goddess? Those whom a sudden gust of passion brings down to the dust can rise up again with a new strong impulse of goodness. But those who, day by day, become dried up in the very fibre of their moral being; those who by some outer parasitic growth choke the inner life by slow degrees,-such men reach one day a deadness which knows no healing.

The separation caused by blindness is the merest physical trifle. But, ah! it suffocates me to find that he is no longer with me, where he stood with me in that hour when we both knew that I was blind. That is a separation indeed!

I, with my love fresh and my faith unbroken, have kept to the shelter of my heart's inner shrine. But my husband has left the cool shade of those things that are ageless and unfading. He is fast disappearing into the barren, waterless waste in his mad thirst for gold.

Sometimes the suspicion comes to me that things are not so bad as they seem: that perhaps I exaggerate because I am blind. It may be that, if my eyesight were unimpaired, I should have accepted the world as I found it. This, at any rate, was the light in which my husband looked at all my moods and fancies.

One day an old Musalman came to the house. He asked my husband to visit his little grand-daughter. I could hear the old man say: "Baba, I am a poor man; but come with me, and Allah will do you good." My husband answered coldly: "What can do for me."

When I heard it, I wondered in my mind why God had not made me deaf as well as blind. The old man heaved a deep sigh, and departed. I sent my maid to fetch him to my room. I met him at the door of the inner apartment, and put some money into his hand.

"Please take this from me," said I, "for your little grand-daughter, and get a trustworthy doctor to look after her. And-pray for my husband."

But the whole of that day I could take no food at all. In the afternoon, when my husband got up from sleep, he asked me: "Why do you look so pale?"

I was about to say, as I used to do in the past: "Oh! It's nothing"; but those days of deception were over, and I spoke to him plainly.

"I have been hesitating," I said, "for days together to tell you something. It has been hard to think out what exactly it was I wanted to say. Even now I may not be able to explain what I had in my mind. But I am sure you know what has happened. Our lives have drifted apart."

My husband laughed in a forced manner, and said: "Change is the law of nature."

I said to him: "I know that. But there are some things that are eternal." Then he became serious.

"There are many women," said he, "who have a real cause for sorrow. There are some whose husbands do not earn money. There are others whose husbands do not love them. But you are making yourself wretched about nothing at all."

Then it became clear to me that my very blindness had conferred on me the power of seeing a world which is beyond all change. Yes! It is true. I am not like other women. And my husband will never understand me.

IV

Our two lives went on with their dull routine for some time. Then there was a break in the monotony. And aunt of my husband came to pay us a visit.

The first thing she blurted out after our first greeting was this: "Well, Kumo, it's a great pity you have become blind; but why do you impose your own affliction on your husband? You must get him to marry another wife."

There was an awkward pause. If my husband had only said something in jest, or laughed in her face, all would have been over. But he stammered and hesitated, and said at last in a nervous, stupid way:

"Do you really think so? Really, aunt, you shouldn't talk like that."

His aunt appealed to me. "Was I wrong, Kumo?" I laughed a hollow laugh.

"Had not you better," said I, "consult some one more competent to decide? The pickpocket never asks permission from the man whose pocket he is going to pick."

"You are quite right," she replied blandly. "Abinash, my dear, let us have our little conference in private. What do you say to that?"

After a few days my husband asked her, in my presence, if she knew of any girl of a decent family who could come and help me in my household work. He knew quite well that I needed no help. I kept silence.

"Oh! there are heaps of them," replied his aunt. "My cousin has a daughter who is just of the marriageable age, and as nice a girl as you could wish. Her people would be only too glad to secure you as a husband."

Again there came from him that forced, hesitating laugh, and he said: "But I never mentioned marriage."

"How could you expect," asked his aunt, "a girl of decent family to come and live in your house without marriage?"

He had to admit that this was reasonable, and remained nervously silent.

I stood alone within the closed doors of my blindness after he had gone, called upon my God and prayed: "O God, save my husband."

When I was coming out of the household shrine from my morning worship a few days later, his aunt took hold of both my hands warmly.

"Kumo, here is the girl," said she, "we were speaking about the other day. Her name is Hemangini. She will be delighted to meet you. Hemo, come here and be introduced to your sister."

My husband entered the room at the same moment. He feigned surprise when he saw the strange girl, and was about to retire. But his aunt said: "Abinash, my dear, what are you running away for? There is no need to do that. Here is my cousin's daughter, Hemangini, came to see you. Hemo, make your bow to him."

As if taken quite by surprise, he began to ply his aunt with questions about the when and why and how of the new arrival.

I saw the hollowness of the whole thing, and took Hemangini by the hand and led her to my own room.

I gently stroked her face and arms and hair, and found that she was about fifteen years old, and very beautiful.

As I felt her face, she suddenly burst out laughing and said: "Why! what are you doing? Are you hypnotising me?"

That sweet ringing laughter of hers swept away in a moment all the dark clouds that stood between us. I threw my right arm about her neck.

"Dear one," said I, "I am trying to see you." And again I stroked her soft face with my left hand.

"Trying to see me?" she said, with a new burst of laughter. "Am I like a vegetable marrow, grown in your garden, that you want to feel me all round to see how soft I am?"

I suddenly bethought me that she did not know I had lost my sight.

"Sister, I am blind," said I.

She was silent. I could feel her big young eyes, full of curiosity, peering into my face. I knew they were full of pity. Then she grew thoughtful and puzzled, and said, after a short pause:

"Oh! I see now. That was the reason your husband invited his aunt to come and stay here."

"No!" I replied, "you are quite mistaken. He did not ask her to come. She came of her own accord."

Hemangini went off into a peal of laughter. "That's just like my aunt," said she. "Oh! Wasn't it nice of her to come without any invitation? But now she's come, you won't get her to move for some time, I can assure yow!"

Then she paused, and looked puzzled.

"But why did father send me?" she asked. "Can you tell me that?"

The aunt had come into the room while we were talking.

Hemangini said to her: "When are you thinking of going back, Aunt?"

The aunt looked very much upset.

"What a question to ask!" said she, "I've never seen such a restless body as you. We've only just come, and you ask when we're going back!"

"It is all very well for you," Hemangini said, "for this house belongs to your near relations. But what about me? I tell you plainly I can't stop here." And then she held my hand and said: "What do you think, dear?"

I drew her to my, heart, but said nothing. The aunt was in a great difficulty. She felt the situation was getting beyond her control; so she proposed that she and her niece should go out together to bathe.

"No! we two will go together," said Hemangini, clinging to me. The aunt gave in, fearing opposition if she tried to drag her away.

Going down to the river Hemangini asked me: "Why don't you have children?"

I was startled by her question, and answered: "How can I tell? My God has not given me any. That is the reason."

"No! That's not the reason," said Hemangini quickly. "You must have committed some sin. Look at my aunt. She is childless. It must be because her heart has some wickedness. But what wickedness is in your heart?"

The words hurt me. I have no solution to offer for the problem of evil. I sighed deeply, and said in the silence of my soul: "My God! Thou knowest the reason."

"Gracious goodness," cried Hemangini, "what are you sighing for? No one ever takes me seriously."

And her laughter pealed across the river.

V

I found out after this that there were constant interruptions in my husband's professional duties. He refused all calls from a distance, and would hurry away from his patients, even when they were close at hand.

Formerly it was only during the mid-day meals and at night-time that he could come into the inner apartment. But now, with unnecessary anxiety for his aunt's comfort, he began to visit her at all hours of the day. I knew at once that he had come to her room, when I heard her shouting for Hemangini to bring in a glass of water. At first the girl would do what she was told; but later on she refused altogether.

Then the aunt would call, in an endearing voice: **"Hemo! Hemo!** Hemangini." But the girl would cling to me with an impulse of pity. A sense of dread and sadness would keep her silent. Sometimes she would shrink towards me like a hunted thing, who scarcely knew what was coming.

About this time my brother came down from Calcutta to visit me. I knew how keen his powers of observation were, and what a hard judge he was. I feared my husband would be ,put on his defence, and have to stand his trial before him. So I endeavoured to hide the true situation behind a mask of noisy cheerfulness. But I am afraid I overdid the part: it was unnatural for me.

My husband began to fidget openly, and asked how long my brother was going to stay. At last his impatience became little short of insulting, and my brother had no help for it but to leave. Before going he placed his hand on my head, and kept it there for some time. I noticed that his hand shook, and a tear fell from his eyes, as he silently gave me his blessing.

I well remember that it was an evening in April, and a market-day.

People who had come into the town were going back home from market. There was the feeling of an impending storm in the air; the smell of the wet earth and the moisture in the wind were all-pervading. I never keep a lighted lamp in my bedroom, when I am alone, lest my clothes should catch fire, or some accident happen. I sat on the floor in my dark room, and called upon the God of my blind world.

"O my Lord," I cried, "Thy face is hidden. I cannot see. I am blind. I hold tight this broken rudder of a heart till my hands bleed. The waves have become too strong for me. How long with thou try me, my God, how long?"

I kept my head prone upon the bedstead and began to sob. As I did so, I felt the bedstead move a little. The next moment Hemangini was by my side. She clung to my neck, and wiped my tears away silently. I do not know why she had been waiting that evening in the inner room, or why she had been lying alone there in the dusk. She asked me no question. She said no word. She simply placed her cool hand on my forehead, and kissed me, and departed.

The next morning Hemangini said to her aunt in my presence: "If you want to stay on, you can. But I don't. I'm going away home with our family servant."

The aunt said there was no need for her to go alone, for she was going away also. Then smilingly and mincingly she brought out, from a plush case, a ring set with pearls.

"Look, Hemo," said she, "what a beautiful ring my Abinash brought for you."

Hemangini snatched the ring from her hand.

"Look, Aunt," she answered quickly, "just see how splendidly I aim." And she flung the ring into the tank outside the window.

The aunt, overwhelmed with alarm, vexation, and surprise, bristled like a hedgehog. She turned to me, and held me by the hand.

"Kumo," she repeated again and again, "don't say a word about this childish freak to Abinash. He would be fearfully vexed."

I assured her that she need not fear. Not a word would reach him about it from my lips.

The next day before starting for home Hemangini embraced me, and said: "Dearest, keep me in mind; do not forget me."

I stroked her face over and over with my fingers, and said: "Sister, the blind have long memories."

I drew her head towards me, and kissed her hair and her

forehead. My world suddenly became grey. All the. beauty and laughter and tender youth, which had nestled so close to me, vanished when Hemangini departed. I went,groping about with arms outstretched, seeking to find out what was left in my deserted world.

My husband came in later. He affected a great relief now that they were gone, but it was exaggerated and empty. He pretended that his aunt's visit had kept him away from work.

Hitherto there had been only the one barrier of blindness between me and my husband. Now another barrier was added,- this deliberate silence about Hemangini. lie feigned utter indifference, but I knew he was having letters about her.

It was early in May. My maid entered my room one morning, and asked me: "What is all this preparation- going on at the landing on the river? Where. is Master going?"

I knew there was something impending, but I said to the maid: "I can't say."

The maid did not dare to ask me any more questions. She sighed, and went away.

Late that night my husband came to me.

"I have to visit a patient in the country," said he. "I shall have to start very early tomorrow morning, and I may have to be away for two or three days."

I got up from my bed. I stood before him, and cried aloud: "Why are you telling me lies?"

My husband stammered out: "What-what lies have I told you?"

I said: "You are going to get married."

He remained silent. For some moments there was no sound in the room. Then I broke the silence:

"Answer me," I cried. "Say, yes."

I shouted out with a loud voice: "No! I shall never allow you. I shall save you from this great disaster, this dreadful sin. If I fail in this, then why am I your wife, and why did I ever worship my God?"

The room remained still as a stone. I dropped on the floor, and clung to my husband's knees.

"What have I done?" I asked. "Where have I been lacking? Tell me truly. Why do you want another wife?"

My husband said slowly: "I will tell you the truth. I am afraid of you. Your blindness has enclosed you in its fortress, and I have now no entrance. To me you are no longer a woman. You are awful as my God. I cannot live my everyday life with you. I want a woman just an ordinary woman whom I can be free to chide and coax and pet and scold."

Oh, tear open my heart and see! What am I else but that,- just an ordinary woman? I am the same girl that I was when I was newly wed,- a girl with all her need to believe, to confide, to worship.

I do not recollect exactly the words that I uttered. I only remember that I said: "If I be a true wife, then, may God be my witness, you shall never do this wicked deed, you shall never break your oath. Before you commit such sacrilege, either I shall become a widow or Hemangini shall die."

Then I fell down on the floor in a swoon. When I came to myself, it was still dark. The birds were silent. My husband had gone.

All that day I sat at my worship in the sanctuary at the household shrine. In the evening a fierce storm, with thunder and lightning and rain, swept down upon the house and shook it. As I crouched before the shrine, I did not ask my God to save my husband from the storm, though he must have been at that time in peril on the river. I prayed that whatever might happen to me, my husband might be saved from this great sin.

Night passed. The whole of the next day I kept my seat at worship. When it was evening there was the noise of shaking and beating at the door. When the door was broken open, they found me lying unconscious on the ground, and carried me to my room.

When I came to myself at last, I heard some one whispering in my ear: "Sister."

I found that I was lying in my room with my head on Hemangini's lap. When my head moved, I heard her dress rustle. It was the sound of bridal silk.

O my God, God! My prayer has gone unheeded! My husband has fallen!

Hemangini bent her head low, and said in a sweet whisper: "Sister, dearest, I have come to ask your blessing on our marriage."

At first my whole body stiffened like the trunk of a tree that has been struck by lightning. Then I sat up, and said, painfully, forcing myself to speak the words:

"Why should I not bless you? You have done no wrong."

Hemangini laughed her merry laugh.

"Wrong!" said she. "When you married it was right; and when I marry, you call it wrong!"

I tried to smile in answer to her laughter. I said in my mind: "My prayer is not the final thing in this world. His will is all. Let the blows descend upon my head; but may they leave my faith and hope in God untouched."

Hemangini bowed to me, and touched my feet. "May you be happy," said I, blessing her, "and enjoy unbroken prosperity."

Hemangini was still unsatisfied.

"Dearest sister," she said, "a blessing for me is not enough. You must make our happiness complete. You must, with those saintly hands of yours, accept into your home my husband also. Let me bring him to you."

I said: "Yes, bring him to me."

A few moments later I heard a familiar footstep, and the question: "Kumo, how are you?"

I started up, and bowed to the ground, and cried: "Dada!"

Hemangini burst out laughing.

"You still call him elder brother?" she asked. "What

nonsense! Call him younger brother now, and pull his ears and tease him, for he has married me, your younger sister."

Then I understood. My husband had been saved from that great sin. He had not fallen.

I knew my Dada had determined never to marry. And, since my mother had died, there was no sacred wish of hers to implore him to wedlock. But I, his sister, by my sore need had brought it to pass. He had married for my sake.

Tears of joy gushed from my eyes, and poured down my cheeks. I tried, but I could not stop them. Dada slowly passed his fingers through my hair. Hemangini clung to me, and went on laughing.

I was lying awake in my bed for the best part of the night, waiting with straining anxiety for my husband's return. I could not imagine how he would bear the shock of shame and disappointment.

When it was long past the hour of midnight, slowly my door opened. I sat up on my bed, and listened.

They were the footsteps of my husband. My heart began to beat wildly. He came up to my bed, held my hand in his.

"Your Dada," said he, "has saved me from destruction. I was being dragged down and down by a moment's madness. An infatuation had seized me, from which I seemed unable to escape. God alone knows what a load I was carrying on that day when I entered the boat. The storm came down on the liver, and covered the sky. In the midst of all my fears I had a secret wish in my heart to be drowned, and so disentangle my life from the knot in which I had tied it. I reached Mathurganj. There I heard the news which set me free. Your brother had married Hemangini. I cannot tell you with what joy and shame I heard it. I hastened on board the boat again. In that moment of self-revelation I knew that I could have no happiness except with you. You are a Goddess."

I laughed and cried at the same time, and said:

"No, no, no! I am not going to be a Goddess any longer. I am simply your own little wife. I am just an ordinary woman."

"Dearest," he replied, "I have also something I want to say to you. Never again put me to shame by calling me your God."

On the next day the little town became joyous with the sound of conch shells. But nobody made any reference to that night of madness when all was so nearly lost.

The Babus of Nayanjore

I

ONCE upon a time the Babus of Nayanjore were famous landholders. They were noted for their princely extravagance. They would tear off the rough border of their Dacca muslin, because it rubbed against their skin. They could spend many thousands of rupees over the wedding of a kitten. On a certain grand occasion it is alleged that in order to turn night into day they lighted numberless lamps and showered silver threads from the sky to imitate sunlight. Those were the days before the flood. The flood came. The line of succession among these old-world Babus, with their lordly habits, could not continue for long. Like a lamp with too many wicks burning, the oil flared away quickly, and the light went out.

Kailas Babu, our neighbour, is the last relic of this extinct magnificence. Before he grew up, his family had very nearly reached its lowest ebb. When his father died, there was one dazzling outburst of funeral extravagance, and then insolvency. The property was sold to liquidate the debt. What little ready money was left over was altogether insufficient to keep up the past ancestral splendours.

Kailas Babu left Nayanjore and came to Calcutta. His son did not remain long in this world of faded glory. He died, leaving behind him an only daughter. In Calcutta we are Kailas Babu's neighbours. Curiously enough our own family history is just the opposite to his. My father got his money by his own exertions, and prided himself on never spending a penny more than was needed. His clothes were those of a working man, and his hands also. He never had any inclination to earn the title of Babu by extravagant display, and I myself, his only son, owe him gratitude for that. He gave me the very best education, and I was able to make my way in the world. I am not ashamed of the fact that I am a self-made man. Crisp bank-notes in my safe are dearer to me than a long pedigree in an empty family chest.

I believe, this was why I disliked seeing Kailas Babu drawing his heavy cheques on the public credit from the bankrupt bank of his ancient Babu reputation. I used to fancy that he looked down on me, because my father had earned money with his own hands.

I ought to have noticed that no one showed any vexation towards Kailas Babu except myself. Indeed it would have been difficult to find an old man who did less harm than he. He was always ready with his kindly little acts of courtesy in times of sorrow and joy. He would join in all the ceremonies and religious observances of his neighbours. His familiar smile would greet young and old alike. His politeness in asking details about domestic affairs was untiring. The friends who met him in the street were perforce ready to be buttonholed, while a long string of questions of this kind followed one another front his lips:

"My dear friend, I am delighted to see you. Are you quite well? How is Shashi? and Dada-is he all right? Do you know, I've only just heard that Madhu's son has got fever. How is he? Have you heard? And Hari Charan Babu-I have not seen him for a long time-I hope he is not ill. What's the matter with Rakkhal? And, er-er, how are the ladies of your family?"

Kailas Babu was spotlessly neat in his dress on all occasions, though his supply of clothes was sorely limited. Every day he used to air his shirts and vests and coats and trousers carefully, and put them out in the sun, along with his bed-quilt, his pillow-case, and the small. carpet on which he always sat. After airing them he would shake them, and brush them, and put them on the rock. His little bits of furniture made his small room decent, and hinted that there was more in reserve if needed. Very often, for want of a servant, he would shut up his house for a while. Then he would iron out his shirts and linen with his own hands, and do other little menial tasks. After this he would open his door and receive his friends again.

Though Kailas Babu, as I have said, had lost all his landed property, he had still some family heirlooms left. There was a silver cruet for sprinkling scented water, a filigree box for otto-of-roses, a small gold salver, a costly ancient shawl, and the old-fashioned ceremonial dress and ancestral turban. These he had rescued with the greatest difficulty from the moneylenders' clutches. On every suitable occasion he would bring them out in state, and thus try to save the world-famed dignity of the Babus of Nayanjore. At heart, the most modest of men, in his daily speech he regarded it as a sacred duty, owed to his rank, to give free play to his family pride. His friends would encourage this trait in his character with kindly good-humour, and it gave them great amusement.

The neighbourhood soon learnt to call him their Thakur Dada.[1] They would flock to his house, and sit with him for hours together. To prevent his incurring any expense, one or other of his friends would bring him tobacco, and say: "Thakur Patin, this morning some tobacco was sent to me from Gaya. Do take it, and see how you like it."

Thakur Dada would take it, and say it .vas excellent. He would then go on to tell of a certain exquisite tobacco which they once smoked in the old days at Nayanjore at the cost of a guinea an ounce.

" I wonder," he used to say, "I wonder if any one would like to try it now. I have some left, and can get it at once."

Every one knew that, if they asked for it, then somehow or other the key of the cupboard would be missing; or else Ganesh, his old family servant, had put it away somewhere.

"You never can be sure," he would add, "where things go to when servants are about. No, this Ganesh of mine; I can't tell you what a fool he is, but I haven't the heart to dismiss him."

Ganesh, for the credit of the family, was quite ready to bear all the blame without a word.

One of the company usually said at this point:

"Never mind, Thakur Dada. Please don't trouble to look for it. This tobacco we're smoking will do quite well. The other would be too strong."

Then Thakur Dada would be relieved, and settle down again, and the talk would go on.

When his guests got up to go away, Thakur Dada would accompany them to the door, and say to them on the door-step: "Oh, by the way, when are you all coming to dine with me?"

One or other of us would answer: "Not just yet, Thakur Dada, not just yet. We'll fix a day later."

"Quite right," he would answer. "Quite right. We had much better wait till the rains come. It's too hot now. And a grand rich dinner such as I should want to give you would upset us in weather like this."

But when the rains did come, every one was very careful not to remind him of his promise. If the subject was brought up, some friend would suggest gently that it was very inconvenient to get about when the rains were so severe, that it would be much better to wait till they were- over. And so the game went on.

His poor lodging was much too small for his position, and we used to condole with him about it. His friends would assure him they quite understood his difficulties: it was next to impossible to get a decent house in Calcutta. Indeed, they had all been looking out for years for a house to suit him, but, I need hardly add, no friend had been foolish enough to find one. Thakur Dada used to say, after a long sigh of resignation: "Well, well, I suppose I shall have to put up with this house after all." Then he would add with a genial smile: "But, you know, I could never bear to be away from my friends. I must be near you. That really compensates for everything."

Somehow I felt all this very deeply indeed. I suppose the real reason was, that when a man is young stupidity appears to him the worst of crimes. Kailas Babu was not really stupid. In ordinary business matters every one was ready to consult him. But with regard to Nayanjore his utterances were certainly void of common sense. Because, out of amused affection for him, no one contradicted his impossible statements, he refused to keep them in bounds. When people recounted in his hearing the glorious history of Nayanjore with absurd exaggerations he would accept all they said with the utmost gravity, and never doubted, even in his dreams, that any one could disbelieve it.

II

When I sit down and try to analyse the thoughts and feelings that I had towards Kailas Babu, I see that there was a still deeper reason for my dislike. I will now explain.

Though I am the son of a rich man, and might have wasted time at college, my industry was such that I took my

M.A. degree in Calcutta University when quite young. My moral character was flawless. In addition, my outward appearance was so handsome, that if I were to call myself beautiful, it might be thought a mark of self-estimation, but could not be considered an untruth.

There could be no question that among the young men of Bengal I was regarded by parents generally as a very eligible match. I was myself quite clear on the point, and had determined to obtain my full value in the marriage market. When I pictured my choice, I had before my mind's eye a wealthy father's only daughter, extremely beautiful and highly educated. Proposals came pouring into me from far and near; large sums in cash were offered. I weighed these offers with rigid impartiality, in the delicate scales of my own estimation. But there was no one fit to be my partner. I became convinced, with the poet Bhabavuti, that In this world's endless time and boundless space One may be born at last to match my sovereign grace.

But in this puny modern age, and this contracted space of modern Bengal, it was doubtful if the peerless creature existed as yet.

Meanwhile my praises were sung in many tunes, and in different metres, by designing parents.

Whether I was pleased with their daughters or not, this worship which they offered was never unpleasing. I used to regard it as my proper due, because I was so good. We are told that when the gods withhold their boons from mortals they still expect their worshippers to pay them fervent honour, and are angry if it is withheld. I had that divine expectance strongly developed in myself.

I have already mentioned that Thakur Dada had an only granddaughter. I had seen her many times, but had never mistaken her for beautiful. No thought had ever entered my mind that she would be a possible partner for myself. All the same, it seemed quite certain to me that some day or other Kailas Babu would offer her, with all due worship, as an oblation at my shrine. Indeed-this was the secret of my dislike I was thoroughly annoyed that he had not done it already.

I heard he had told his friends that the Babus of Nayanjore never craved a boon. Even if the girl remained unmarried, he would not break the family tradition. It was this arrogance of his that made me angry. My indignation smouldered for some time. But I remained perfectly silent, and bore it with the utmost patience, because I was so good.

As lightning accompanies thunder, so in my character a flash of humour was mingled with the mutterings of my wrath. It was, of course, impossible for me to punish the old man merely to give vent to my rage; and for a long time I did nothing at all. But suddenly one day such an amusing plan came into my head, that I could not resist the temptation of carrying it into effect.

I have already said that many of Kailas Babu's friends used to flatter the old man's vanity to the full. One, who was a retired Government servant, had told him that whenever he saw the Chota Lord Sahib he always asked for the latest news about the Babus of Nayanjore, and the Chota Lord had been heard to say that in all Bengal the only really respectable families were those of the Maharaja of Burdwan and the Babus of Nayanjore. When this monstrous falsehood was told to Kailas Babu he was extremely gratified, and often repeated the story. And wherever after that he met this Government servant in company he would ask, along with other questions:

"Oh! er-by the way, how is the Chota Lord Sahib? Quite well, did you say? Ah, yes, I am so delighted to hear it! And the dear Mem Sahib, is she quite well too? Ah, yes! And the little children-are they quite well also? Ah, yes! that's very good news! Be sure and give them my compliments when you see them."

Kailas Babu would constantly express his intention of going some day and paying a visit to the Sahib. But it may be taken for granted that many Chota Lords and Burra Lords also would come and go, and much water would pass down the Hoogly, before the family coach of Nayanjore would be furnished up to pay a visit to Government House.

One day I took Kailas Babu aside, and told him in a whisper: "Thakur Dada, I was at the Levee yesterday, and the Chota Lord happened to mention the Babus of Nayanjore. I told him that Kailas Babu had come to town. Do you know, he was terribly hurt because you hadn't called. He told me he was going to put etiquette on one side, and pay you a private visit himself this very afternoon."

Anybody else could have seen through this plot of mine in a moment. And, if it had beer, directed against another person, Kailas Babu would have understood the joke. But after all he had heard from his friend the Government servant, and after all his own exaggerations, a visit from the Lieutenant-Governor seemed the most natural thing in the world. He became highly nervous and excited at my news. Each detail of the coming visit exercised him greatly-most of all his own ignorance of English. How on earth was that difficulty to be met? I told him there was no difficulty at all: it was aristocratic not to know English: and, besides, the Lieutenant-Governor always brought an interpreter with him, and he had expressly mentioned that this visit was to be private.

About midday, when most of our neighbours were at work, and the rest were asleep, a carriage and pair stopped before the lodging of Kailas Babu. Two flunkeys in livery came up the stairs, and announced in a loud voice, "The Chota Lord Sahib has arrived." Kailas Babu was ready, waiting for him, in his old-fashioned ceremonial robes and ancestral turban, and Ganesh was by his side, dressed in his master's best suit of clothes for the occasion. When the Chota Lord Sahib was announced, Kailas Babu ran panting and puffing and trembling to the door, and led in a friend of mine, in disguise, with repeated salaams, bowing low at each step, and walking backward as best he could. He had his old family shawl spread over a hard wooden chair, and he asked the

Lord Sahib to be seated. He then made a high-flown speech in Urdu, the ancient Court language of the Sahibs, and presented on the golden salver a string of gold *mohurs,* the last relics of his broken fortune. The old family servant Ganesh, with an expression of awe bordering on terror, stood behind with the scent-sprinkler, drenching the Lord Sahib, touching him gingerly from time to time with the otto-of-roses from the filigree box.

Kailas Babu repeatedly expressed his regret at not being able to receive his Honour Bahadur with all the ancestral magnificence of his own family estate at Nayanjore. There he could have welcomed him properly with due ceremonial. But in Calcutta he was a mere stranger and sojourner—in fact a fish out of water.

My friend, with his tall silk hat on, very gravely nodded. I need hardly say that according to English custom the hat ought to have been removed inside the room. But my friend did not dare to take it off for fear of detection; and Kailas Babu and his old servant Ganesh were sublimely unconscious of the breach of etiquette.

After a ten minutes' interview, which consisted chiefly of nodding the head, my friend rose to his feet to depart. The two flunkeys in livery, as had been planned beforehand, carried off in state the string of gold *mohurs,* the gold silver, the old ancestral shawl, the silver scent-sprinkler, and the otto-of-roses filigree box; they placed them ceremoniously in the carriage. Kailas Babu regarded this as the usual habit of Chota Lord Sahibs.

I was watching all the while from the next room. My sides were aching with suppressed laughter. When I could hold myself in no longer, I rushed into a further room, suddenly to discover, in a corner, a young girl sobbing as if her heart would break. When she saw my uproarious laughter she stood upright in passion, flashing the lightning of her big dark eyes in mine, and said with a tear-choked voice: "Tell me! What harm has my grandfather done to you? Why have you come to deceive him? Why have you come here? Why"

She could say no more. She covered her face with her hands, and broke into sobs.

My laughter vanished in a moment. It had never occurred to me that there was anything but a supremely funny joke in this act of mine, and here I discovered that I had given the cruellest pain to this tenderest little heart. All the ugliness of my cruelty rose up to condemn me. I slunk out of the room in silence, like a kicked dog.

Hitherto I had only looked upon Kusum, the granddaughter of Kailas Babu, as a somewhat worthless commodity in the marriage market, waiting in vain to attract a husband. But now I found, with a shock of surprise, that in the corner of that room a human heart was beating.

The whole night through I had very little sleep. My mind was in a tumult. On the next day, very early in the morning, I took all those stolen goods back to Kailas Babu's lodgings, wishing to hand them over in secret to the servant Ganesh. I waited outside the door, and, not finding any one, went upstairs to Kailas Babu's room. I heard from the passage Kusum asking her grandfather in the most winning voice: "Dada, dearest, do tell me all that the Chota Lord Sahib said to you yesterday. Don't leave out a single word. I am dying to hear it all over again."

And Dada needed no encouragement. His face beamed over with pride as he related all manner of praises which the Lord Sahib had been good enough to utter concerning the ancient families of Nayanjore. The girl was seated before him, looking up into his face, and listening with rapt attention. She was determined, out of love for the old man, to play her part to the full.

My heart was deeply touched, and tears came to my eyes. I stood there in silence in the passage, while Thakur Dada finished all his embellishments of the Chota Lord Sahib's wonderful visit. When he left the room at last, I took the stolen goods and laid them at the. feet of the girl and came away without a word.

Later in the day I called again to see Kailas Babu himself. According to our ugly modern custom, I had been in the habit of making no greeting at all to this old man when I came into the room. But on this day I made a low bow, and touched his feet. I am convinced the old man thought that the coming of the Chota Lord Sahib to his house was the cause of my new politeness. He was highly gratified by it, and an air of benign severity shone from his eyes. His friends had flocked in, and he had already begun to tell again at full length the story of the Lieutenant-Governor's visit with still further adornments of a most fantastic kind. The interview was already becoming an epic, both in quality and in length.

When the other visitors had taken their leave, I made my proposal to the old man in a humble manner. I told him that, "though I could never for a moment hope to be worth of marriage connection with such an illustrious family, yet... etc. etc."

When I made clear my proposal of marriage, the old man embraced me, and broke out in a tumult of joy: "I am a poor man, and could never have expected such great good fortune."

That was the first and last time in his life that Kailas Babu confessed to being poor. It was also the first and last time in his life that he forgot, if only for a single moment, the ancestral dignity that belongs to the Babus of Nayanjore.

Living or Dead?

I

THE widow in the house of Saradasankar, the Ranihat zemindar, had no kinsmen of her father's family. One after another all had died. Nor had she in her husband's family any one she could call her own, neither husband nor son. The child of her brother-in-law Saradasankar was her darling. For a long time after his birth, his mother had been very ill, and the widow, his aunt Kadambini, had fostered him. If a woman fosters another's child, her love for him is all the stronger because she has no claim upon him—no claim of kinship, that is, but simply the claim of love. Love cannot prove its claim by any document which society accepts, and does not wish to prove it; it merely worships with double passion its life's uncertain treasure. Thus all the widow's thwarted love went out towards this little child. One night in *Sraban* Kadambini died suddenly. For some reason her heart stopped beating. Everywhere else the world held on its course; only in this gentle little breast, suffering with love, the watch of time stood still for ever.

Lest they should be harassed by the police, four of the zemindar's Brahmin servants took away the body, without ceremony, to be burned. The burning-ground of Ranihat was very far from, the village. There was a hut beside a tank, a huge banian near it, and nothing more. Formerly a river, now completely dried up, ran through the ground, and a part of the watercourse had been dug out to make a tank for the performance of funeral rites. The people considered the tank as part of the river and reverenced it as such.

Taking the body into the hut, the four men sat down to wait for the wood. The time seemed so long that two of the four grew restless, and went to see why it did not come.. Nitai and Gurucharan being gone, Bidhu and Banamali remained to watch over the body.

It was a dark night of Sraban. Heavy clouds hung in starless sky. The two men sat silent in the dark room. Their matches and lamp were useless. The matches were damp, and would not light for all their efforts, and the lantern went out. After a long silence, one said: "Brother, it would be good if we had a bowl of tobacco. In our hurry we brought none"

The other answered: "I can run and bring all we want."

Understanding why Banamali wanted to go,' Bidhu said: "I daresay! Meanwhile, I suppose I am to sit here alone!"

Conversation ceased again. Five minutes seemed like an hour. In their minds they cursed the two who had gone to fetch the wood, and they began to suspect that they sat gossiping in some pleasant nook. There was no sound anywhere, except the incessant noise of frogs and crickets from the tank. Then suddenly they fancied that the bed shook slightly, as if the dead body had turned on its side. Bidhu and Banamali trembled, and began muttering: "Ram, Ram." A deep sigh was heard in the room. In a moment the watchers leapt out of the hut, and raced for the village.

After running about three miles, they met their colleagues coming back with a lantern. As a matter of fact, they *had* gone to smoke, and knew nothing about the wood. But they declared that a tree had been cut down, and that, when, it was split up, it would be brought along at once. Then Bidhu and Banamali told them what had happened in the hut. Nitai and Gurucharan scoffed at the story, and abused Bidhu and Banamali angrily for leaving their duty.

Without delay all four returned to the hut. As they entered, they saw at once that the body was gone; nothing but an empty bed remained. They stared at one another. Could a jackal have taken it? But there was no scrap of clothing anywhere. Going outside, they saw that on the mud that had collected at the door of the hut there were a woman's tiny footprints, newly made. Saradasankar was no fool, and they could hardly persuade him to believe in this ghost story. So after much discussion the four decided that it would be best to say that the body had been burnt.

Towards dawn, when the men with the wood arrived they were told that, owing to their delay, the work 'had been, done without them; there had been some wood in the hut after ail. No one was likely to question this, since a dead body is not such a valuable property that any one would steal it.

II

Every one knows that, even when there is no sign, life is often secretly present, and may begin again in an apparently dead body. Kadambini was not dead; only the machine of her life had for some reason suddenly stopped.

When consciousness returned, she saw dense darkness on all sides. It occurred to her that she was not lying in her usual place. She called out "Sister," but no answer came from the darkness. As she sat up, terrorstricken, she remembered her death-bed, the sudden pain at her breast, the beginning of a choking sensation. Her elder sister-in-law was warming some milk for the child, when Kadambini became faint, and fell on the bed, saying with a choking voice: "Sister, bring the child here. I am worried." After that everything was black, as when an inkpot is upset over an exercise-book. Kadambini's memory and consciousness, all the letters of the world's book, in a moment became formless. The widow could not remember whether the child, in the sweet voice of love, called her "Auntie," as if for the last time, or not; she could not remember whether, as she left the world she knew for death's endless unknown journey, she had received a parting gift of affection, love's passage-money for the silent land. At first, I fancy, she thought the lonely dark place was the House of Yama, where there is nothing to see, nothing to hear, nothing to do, only an eternal watch. But when a cold damp wind drove through the open door, and she heard the croaking of frogs, she remembered vividly and in a moment all the rains of her short life, and could feel her kinship with the earth.

Then came a flash of lightning, and she saw the tank, the banian, the great plain, the far-off trees. She remembered how at full moon she had sometimes come to bathe in this tank, and how dreadful death had seemed when she saw a corpse on the burning ground.

Her first thought was to return home. But then she reflected: "I am dead. How can I return home? That would bring disaster on them. I have left the kingdom of the living; I am my own ghost!" If this were not so, she reasoned, how could she have got out of Sardasankar's well-guarded zenana, and come to this distant burning-ground at midnight? Also, if her funeral rites had not been finished, where had the men gone who should bum her? Recalling her death-moment in Saradasankar's brightlylit house, she now found herself alone in a distant, deserted, dark burning ground. Surely she was no member of earthly society! Surely she was a creature of horror, of ill-omen, her own ghost!

At this thought, all the bonds were snapped which bound her to the world. She felt that she had marvellous strength, endless freedom. She could do what she liked, go where she pleased. Mad with the inspiration of this new idea, she rushed from the hut like a gust of wind, and stood upon the burning-ground. All trace of shame or fear had left her.

But as she walked on and on, her feet grew tired, her body weak. The plain stretched on endlessly; here and there were paddy-fields; sometimes she found herself standing knee-deep in water.

At the first glimmer of dawn she heard one or two birds cry from the bamboo-clumps by the distant houses. Then terror seized her. She could not tell in what new relation she stood to the earth and to living folk. So long as she had been on the plain, on the burning-ground, covered by the dark night of *sraban*, so long she had been fearless, a denizen of her own kingdom. By daylight the homes of men filled her with fear. Men and ghosts dread each ether, for their tribes inhabit different banks of the river of death.

III

Her clothes were clotted in the mud; strange thoughts and walking by night had given her the aspect of a madwoman; truly, her apparition was such that folk might have been afraid of her, and children might have stoned her or run away. Luckily, the first to catch sight of her was a traveller. He came up, and said: "Mother, you look a respectable woman. Wherever are you going, alone and in this guise?"

Kadambini, unable to collect her thoughts, stared at him in silence. She could not think that she was still in touch with the world, that she looked like a respectable woman, that a traveller was asking her questions.

Again the man said: "Come, mother, I will see you home. Tell me where you live."

Kadambini thought. To return to her father-in-law's house would be absurd, and she had no father's house. Then she remembered the. friend of her childhood. She had not seen Jogmaya since the days of her youth, but from time to time they had exchanged letters. Occasionally there had been quarrels between them, as was only right, since Kadambini wished to make it clear that her love for Jogmaya was unbounded, while her friend complained that Kadambini did not return a love equal to her own. They were both sure that, if they once met, they would be inseparable.

Kadambini said to the traveller: "I will go to Sripati's house at Nisindapur."

As he was going to Calcutta, Nisindapur, though not near, was on his way. So he took Kadambini to Sripati's house, and the friends met again. At first they did not recognise one another, but gradually each recognised the features of the other's childhood.

"What luck!" said Jogmaya. "I never dreamt that I should see you again. But how have you come here, sister? Your father-in-law's folk surely didn't let you go!"

Kadambini remained silent, and at last said: "Sister, do not ask about my father-in-law. Give me a corner, and treat me as a servant: I will do your work."

"What?" cried Jogmaya. "Keep you like a servant! Why, you are my closest friend, you are my—"and so on and so on.

Just then Sripati came in. Kadambini stared at him for some time, and then went out very slowly. She kept her head uncovered, and showed not the slightest modesty or respect. Jogmaya, fearing that Sripati would be prejudiced against her friend, began an elaborate explanation. But Sripati, who readily agreed to anything Jogmaya said, cut short her story, and left his wife uneasy in her mind.

Kadambini had come, but she was not at one with her friend: death was between them. She could feel no intimacy for others so long as her existence perplexed her and consciousness remained. Kadambini would look at Jogmaya, and brood. She would think: "She has her husband and her work, she lives in a world far away frorn mine. She shares affection and duty with the people of the world; I am an empty shadow. She is among the living; I am in eternity."

Jogmaya also was uneasy, but could not explain why. Women do not love mystery, because, though uncertainty may be transmuted into poetry, into heroism, into scholarship, it cannot be turned to account in household work. So, when a woman cannot understand a thing, she either destroys and forgets it, or she shapes it anew for her own use; if she fails to deal with it in one of these ways, she loses her temper with it. The greater Kadambini's abstraction became, the more impatient was Jogmaya with her, wondering what trouble weighed upon her mind.

Then a new danger arose. Kadambini was afraid of herself; yet she could not flee from herself. Those who fear ghosts fear those who are behind them; wherever they cannot see there is fear. But Kadambini's chief terror lay in herself, for

she dreaded nothing external. At the dead of night, when alone in her room, she screamed; in the evening, when she saw her shadow in the lamp-light, her whole body shook. Watching her tearfulness, the rest of the house fell into a sort of terror. The servants and Jogmaya herself began to see ghosts.

One midnight, Kadambini came out from her bedroom weeping, and wailed at Jogmaya's door: "Sister, sister, let me lie at your feet! Do not put me by myself!"

Jogmaya's anger was no less than her fear. She would have liked to drive Kadambini frorn the house that very second. The good-natured Sripati, after much effort, succeeded in quieting their guest, and put her in the next room.

Next day Sripati was unexpectedly summoned to his wife's apartments. She began to upbraid him: "You, do you call yourself a man? A woman runs away from her father-in-law, and enters your house; a month passes, and you haven't hinted that she should go away, nor have I heard the slightest protest from you. I should take it as a favour if you would explain yourself. You men are all alike."

Most men have such an unreasoning fondness for their wives that they willingly allow themselves to be put in the wrong. Although Sripati was prepared to touch Jogmaya's body, and swear that his kind feeling towards the helpless but beautiful Kadambini was no whit greater than it should be, he could not prove it by his behaviour. He thought that her father-in-law's people must have treated this forlorn widow abominably, if she could bear it no longer, and was driven to take refuge with him. As she had neither father nor mother, how could he desert her? So saying, he let the matter drop, for he had no mind to distress Kadambini by asking her unpleasant questions.

His wife, then, tried other means of attack upon her sluggish lord, until at last he saw that for the sake of peace he must send word to Kadambini's father-in-law. The result of a letter, he thought, might not be satisfactory; so he resolved to go to Ranihat, and act on what he learnt.

So Sripati went, and Jogmaya on her part said to Kadambini: "Friend, it hardly seems proper for you to stop here any longer. What will people say?"

Kadambini stared solemnly at Jogmaya, and said: "What have I to do with people?"

Jogmaya was astounded. Then she said sharply: "If you have nothing to do with people, we have. How can we explain the detention of a woman belonging to another house?"

Kadambini said: "Where is my father-in-law's house?"

"Confound it!" thought Jogmaya. "What will the wretched woman say next?"

Very slowly Kadambini said: "What have I to do with you? Am I of the earth? You laugh, weep, love; each grips and holds his own; I merely look. You are human, I a shadow. I cannot understand why God has kept me in this world of yours."

So strange were her look and speech that Jogmaya understood something of her drift, though not all. Unable either to dismiss her, or to ask her any more questions, she went away, oppressed with thought.

IV

It was nearly ten o'clock at night when Sripati returned from Ranihat. The earth was drowned in torrents of rain. It seemed that the downpur would never stop, that the night would never end.

Jogmaya asked: "Well?"

"I've lots to say, presently."

So saying, Sripati changed his clothes, and sat down to supper; then he lay down for a smoke. His mind was perplexed.

His wife stifled her curiosity for a long time; then she came to his couch and demanded: "What did you hear?"

"That you have certainly made a mistake."

Jogmaya was nettled. Women never make mistakes, or, if they do, a sensible man never mentions them; it is better to take them on his own shoulders. Jogmaya snapped: "May I be permitted to hear how?"

Sripati replied: "The woman you have taken into your house is not your Kadambini."

Hearing this, she was greatly annoyed, especially since it was her husband who said it. "What! I don't know my own friend? I must come to you to recognise her! You are clever, indeed!"

Sripati explained that there was no need to quarrel about his cleverness. He could prove what he said. There was no doubt that Jogmaya's Kadambini was dead.

Jogmaya replied: "Listen! You've certainly made some huge mistake. You've been to the wrong house, or are confused as to :what you have heard. Who told you to go yourself? Write a letter, and everything will be cleared up."

Sripati was hurt by his wife's lack of faith in his executive ability; he produced all sorts of proof, without result. Midnight found them still asserting and contradicting. Although they were both agreed now that Kadarnbini should be got out of the house, although Sripati believed that their guest had deceived his wife all the time by a pretended acquaintance, and Jogmaya that she was a prostitute, yet in the present discussion neither would acknowledge defeat. By degrees their voices became so loud that they forgot that Kadambini was sleeping in the next room.

The one said: "We're in a nice fix! I tell you, I heard it with my own ears!" And the other answered angrily: "What do I care about that? I can see with my own eyes, surely?"

At length Jogmaya said: "Very well. Tell me when Kadambini died." She thought that if she could find a discrepancy between the day of death and the date of some

letter from Kadambini, she could prove that Sripati erred.

He told her the date of Kadambini's death, and they both saw that it fell on the very day before she came to their house. Jogmaya's heart trembled, and even Sripati was not unmoved.

Just then the door flew open; a damp wind swept in and blew the lamp out. The darkness rushed after it, and filled the whole house. Kadambini stood in the room. It was nearly one o'clock, and the rain was pelting outside.

Kadambini spoke: "Friend, I am your Kadambini, but I am no longer living. I am dead."

Jogrnaya screamed with terror; Sripati could not speak.

"But, save in being dead, I have done you no wrong. If I have no place among the living, I have none among the dead. Oh! whither shall I go?" Crying as if to wake the sleeping Creator in the dense night of rain, she asked again: "Ohl whither shall I go?"

So saying, Kadambini left her friend fainting in the dark house, and went out into the world, seeking her own place.

V

It is hard to say how Kadambini reached Ranihat. At first she showed herself to no one, but spent the whole day in a ruined temple, starving. When the untimely afternoon of the rains was pitch-black, and people huddled into their houses for fear of the impending storm, then Kadambini came forth. Her heart trembled as she reached her father-in-Law's house; and when, drawing a thick veil over her face, she entered, none of the doorkeepers objected, since they took her for a servant. And the rain was pouring down, and the wind howled.

The mistress, Saradasankar's wife, was playing cards with her widowed sister. A servant was in the kitchen, the sick child was sleeping in the bedroom. Kadambini, escaping every one's notice, entered this room. I do not know why she had come to her father-in-law's house; she herself did not know; she felt only that she wanted to see her child again. She had no thought where to go next, or what to do.

In the lighted room she saw the child sleeping his fists clenched, his body wasted with fever. At sight of him, her heart became parched and thirsty. If only she could press that tortured body to her breast! Immediately the thought followed: "I do not exist. Who would see it? His mother loves company, loves gossip and cards. Alt the time that she left me in charge, she was herself free from anxiety, nor was she troubled about him in the least. Who will look after him now as I did?"

The child turned on his side, and cried, half asleep: "Auntie, give me water." Her darling had not yet forgotten his auntie! In a fever of excitement, she poured out some water, and, taking him to her breast, she gave it him.

As long as he was asleep, the child felt no strangeness in taking water from the accustomed hand. But when Kadambini satisfied her long-starved longing, and kissed him and began rocking him asleep again, he awoke and embraced her. "Did you die, Auntie?" he asked.

"Yes, darling,"

"And you have come back? Do not die again."

Before she could answer disaster overtook her. One of the maidservants coming in with a cup of sago dropped it, and fell down. At the crash the mistress left her cards, and entered the room. She stood like a pillar of wood, unable to flee or speak. Seeing all this, the child, too, became terrified, and burst out weeping: "Go away, Auntie," he said, "go away!"

Now at last Kadambini understood that she had not died. The old room, the old things, the *same* child, the same love, all returned to their living state, without change or difference between her and them. In her friend's house she had felt that her childhood's companion was dead. In her child's room she knew that the boy's "Auntie" was not dead at all. In anguished tones she said: "Sister, why do you dread me? See, I am as you knew me."

Her sister-in-law could endure no longer, and fell into a faint. Saradasankar himself entered the zenana. With folded hands, he said piteously: "Is this right? Satis is my only son. Why do you show yourself to him? Are we not your own kin? Since you went, he has wasted away daily; his fever has been incessant; day and night he cries: 'Auntie, Auntie.' You have left the world; break these bonds of *maya.*[1] We will perform all funeral honours"

Kadambini could bear no more. She said: "Oh, I am not dead, I am not dead. Oh, how can I persuade you that I am not dead? I am living, living!" She lifted a brass pot from the ground and dashed it against her forehead. The blood ran from her brow. "Look!" she cried, "I am *living!"* Saradasankar stood like an image; the child screamed with fear, the two fainting women lay still.

Then Kadambini, shouting "I am not dead, I am not dead," went down the steps to the zenana well, and plunged in. From the upper story Saradasankar heard the splash.

All night the rain poured; it poured next day at dawn, was pouring still at noon. By dying, Kadambini had given proof that she was not dead.

1. Illusory affection binding a soul to the world

We Crown Thee King"

WHEN Nabendu Sekhar was wedded to Arunlekha, the God of marriage smiled from behind the sacrificial fire. Alas! what is sport for the gods is not always a joke to us poor mortals.

Purnendu Sekhar, the father of Nabendu, was a man well known amongst the English officials of the Government, in the voyage of life he had arrived at the desert shores of Rai Bahadurship by diligently plying his oars of *salaams.* He held in reserve enough for further advancement; but at the age of fifty-five, his tender gaze still fixed on the misty peak of Raja-hood, he suddenly found himself transported to a region where earthly honours and decorations are naught, and his salaam-wearied neck found everlasting repose on the funeral pyre.

According to modern science, force is not destroyed, but is merely converted to another form, and applied to another point. So Purnendu's *salaam*-force, constant handmaid of the fickle Goddess of Fortune, descended from the shoulder of the father to that of his worthy son; and the youthful head of Nabendu Sekhar began to move up and down, at the doors of high-placed Englishmen, like a pumpkin swayed by the wind.

The traditions of the family into which he had married were entirely different. Its eldest son, Pramathanath, had won for himself the love of his kinsfolk and the regard of all who knew him. His kinsmen and his neighbours looked up to him as their ideal in all things.

Pramathanath was a Bachelor of Arts, and in addition was gifted with common sense. But he held no high official position; he had no handsome salary; nor did he exert any influence with his pen. There was no one in power to lend him a helping hand, because he desired to keep away from Englishmen, as much as they desired to keep away from him. So it happened that he shone only within the sphere of his family and his friends, and excited no admiration beyond it.

Yet this Pramathanath had once sojourned in England for some three years. The kindly treatment he received during his stay there overpowered him so much that he forgot the sorrow and the humiliation of his own country, and came back dressed in European clothes. This rather grieved his brothers and his sisters at first, but after a few days they began to think that European clothes suited nobody better, and gradually they came to share his pride and dignity.

On his return from England, Pramathanath resolved that he would show the world how to associate with Anglo-Indians on terms of equality.

Those of our countrymen who think that no such association is possible, unless we bend our knees to them, showed their utter lack of self-respect, and were also unjust to the 'English-so thought Pramathanath.

He brought with him letters of introduction from many distinguished Englishmen at home, and these gave him some recognition in Anglo- society. He and his wife occasionally enjoyed English hospitality at tea, dinner, sports and other entertainments. Such good luck intoxicated him, and began to produce a tingling sensation in every vein of his body.

About this time, at the opening of a new railway line, many of the town, proud recipients of official favour, were invited by the LieutenantGovernor to take the first trip. Pramathanath was among them. On the return journey, a European Sergeant of the Police expelled some Indian gentlemen from a railway-carriage with great insolence. Pramathanath, dressed in his European clothes, was there. He, too, was getting out, when the Sergeant said: "You needn't move, sir. Keep your seat, please."

At first Pramathanath felt flattered at the special respect thus shown to him. When, however, the train went on, the dull rays of the setting sun, at the west of the fields. now ploughed up and stripped of green, seemed in his eyes to spread a glow of shame over the whole country. Sitting near the window of his lonely compartment, he seemed to catch a glimpse of the downcast eyes of his Motherland, hidden behind the trees. As Pramathanath sat there, lost in reverie, burning tears flowed down his cheeks, and his heart bursted with indignation.

He now remembered the story of a donkey who was drawing the chariot of an idol along the street. The wayfarers bowed down to the idol, and touched the dusty ground with their foreheads. The foolish donkey imagined that all this reverence was being shown to him. "The only difference," said Pramathanath to himself, "between the donkey and myself is this: I understand to-day that the respect I receive is not giver, to me but to the burden on my back."

Arriving home, Pramathanath called together all the children of the household, arid lighting a big bonfire, threw all his European clothes into it one by one. The children danced round and round it and the higher the flames shot up, the greater was their merriment. After that, Pramathanath gave up his sip of a tea and bits of toast in Anglo-Indian houses, and once again sat inaccessible within the castle of his house, while his insulted friends went abut from the door of one Englishman to that of another, bending their turbaned heads as before.

By an irony of fate, poor Nabendu Sekhar married the second daughter of this house. His sisters-in-law were well educated and handsome Nabendu considered he had made a lucky bargain. But he lost no time in trying to impress on the family that it was a rare bargain on their side also. As if by mistake, he would often hand to his sisters-in law sundry letters that his late father had received from Europeans. And when the cherry lips of those young ladies smiled sarcastically, and the point of a shining dagger peeped out of its sheath of red velvet, the unfortunate man saw his folly, and regretted it.

Labanyalekha, the eldest sister, surpassed the rest in beauty and cleverness. Finding an auspicious day, she put

on the mantel-shelf of Nabendu's bedroom two pairs of English boots, daubed with vermilion, and arranged flowers, sandal-paste, incense and a couple of burning candles before them in true ceremonial fashion. When Nabendu came in, the two sisters-in-law stood on either side of him, and said with mock solemnity: "Bow down to your gods, and may you prosper through their blessings."

The third sister Kiranlekha, spent many days in embroidering with red silk one hundred common English names such as Jones, Smith, Brown, Thomson, etc., on a *chadar.* When it was ready, she presented this *namavali*[1] to Nabendu Sekhar with great ceremony.

The fourth, Sasankalekha, of tender age and therefore of no account, said: "I will make you a string of beads, brother, with which to tell the names of your gods-the sahibs." Her sisters reproved her, saying: "Run away, you saucy girl."

Feelings of shame and irritation assailed by turns the mind of Nabendu Sekhar. Still he could not forgo the company of his sisters-in-law especially as the eldest one was beautiful. Her honey was no less than her gall, and Nabendu's mind tasted at once the sweetness of the one and the bitterness of the other. The butterfly, with its bruised wings, buzzes round the flowers in blind fury, unable to depart.

The society of his sisters-in-law so much infatuated him that at last Nabendu began to disavow his craving for European favours. When he went to *salaam* the Burra Sahib, he used to pretend that he was going to listen to a speech by Mr. Surendranath Banerjea. When he went to the railway station to pay respects to the Chota Sahib, returning from Darjeeling, he would tell his sisters-in-law that he expected his youngest uncle.

It was a sore trial to the unhappy man placed between the crossfires of his Sahib and his sisters-in-law. The sisters-in-law, however, secretly vowed that they would not rest till the Sahibs had been put to rout.

About this time it was rumoured that Nabendu's name would be included in the forthcoming list of Birthday honours, and that he would mount the first step of the ladder to Paradise by becoming a Rai Bahadur. The poor fellow had not the courage to break the joyful news to his sisters-in-law. One evening, however, when the autumn moon was flooding the earth with its mischievous beams, Nabetidu's heart was so full that he could not contain himself any longer, and he told his wife. The next day, Mrs. Nabendu betook herself to her eldest sister's house in a palanquin, and in a voice choked with tears bewailed her lot.

"He isn't going to grow a tail," said Labanya, "by becoming a Far Bahadur, is he? Why should you feel so very humiliated?"

"Oh no, sister dear," replied Ar unlekha "I am prepared to be anything-but not a Rai Bahadurni." The fact was that in her circle of acquaintances there was one Bhutnath Babu, who was a Rai Bahadur, and that explained her intense aversion to that title.

Labanya said to her sister in soothing tones: "Don't be upset about it, dear; I will see what I can do to prevent it."

Babu Nilratan, the husband of Labanya, was a pleader at Buxar. When the autumn was over, Nabendu received an invitation from Labanya to pay them a visit, and he started for Buxar greatly pleased.

The early winter of the western province endowed Labanyalekha with new health and beauty, and brought a glowing colour to her pale cheeks. She looked like the flower-laden *Lasa* reeds on a clear autumn day, growing by the lonely bank of a rivulet. To Nabendu's enchanted eyes she appeared like a *malati* plant in full blossom, showering dewdrops brilliant with the morning light.

Nabendu had never felt better in his life. The exhilaration of his own health and the genial company of his pretty sister-in-law made him think himself light enough to tread on air. The Ganges in front of the garden seemed to him to be flowing ceaselessly to regions unknown, as though it gave shape to his own wild fantasies.

As he returned in the early morning from his walk on the bank of the river, the mellow rays of the winter sun gave his whole frame that pleasing sensation of warmth which lovers feel in each other's arms. Coming home, he would now and then find his sister-in-law amusing herself by cooking some dishes. He would offer his help, and display his want of skill and ignorance at every step. But Nabendu did not appear to be at all anxious to improve himself by practice and attention. On the contrary he thoroughly enjoyed the rebukes he received from his sister-in-law. He was at great pains to prove every day that he was inefficient and helpless as a new-born babe in mixing spices, handling the saucepan, and regulating the heat so as to prevent things getting burnt-and he was duly rewarded with pitiful smiles and scoldings.

In the middle of the day he ate a great deal of the good food set before him, incited by his keen appetite and the coaxing of his sister-in-law. Later on, he would sit down to a game of cards-at which lie betrayed the same lack of ability. He would cheat, pry into his adversary's hand, quarrel-but never did he win a single rubber, and worse still, he would not acknowledge defeat. This brought him abuse every day, and still he remained incorrigible.

There was, however, one matter in which his reform was complete. For the time, at least, he had forgotten that to win the smiles of Sahibs was the final goal of life. He was beginning to understand how happy and worthy we might feel by winning the affection and esteem of those near and dear to us.

Besides, Nabendu was now moving in a new : mosphere. Labanya's husband, Babu Nilratan, a leader of the Bar, was reproached by many because he refused to pay his respects to European officials. To all such reproaches Nilratan would reply: "No, thank you,—if they are not polite enough to return my call, then the politeness I offer them is a loss that can never be made up for. The sands of the desert may be

1. A namavali is a sheet of cloth printed all over with the names of Hindu gods and goddesses and worn by pious Hindus when engaged in devotional exercises.

very white and shiny, but I would much rather sow my seeds in black soil, where I can expect a return."

And Nabendu began to adopt similar ideas, all regardless of the f uture. His chance of Far Bahadurship throve on the soil carefully prepared by his late father and also by himself in days gone by, nor was any fresh watering required. Had he not at great expense had laid out a splendid race-course in a town, which was a fashionable resort of Europeans?

When the time of Congress drew near, Nilratan received a request from headquarters to collect subscriptions. Nabendu, free from anxiety, was merrily engaged in a game of cards with his sister-in-law, when Nilratan Babu came upon him with a subscription book in his hand, and said: "Your signature, please."

From old habit Nabendu looked horrified. Labanya, assuming an air of great concern and anxiety, said: "Never do that. It would ruin your race-course beyond repair."

Nabendu blurted out: "Do you suppose I pass sleepless nights through fear of that?"

"We won't publish your name in the papers," said Nilratan reassuringly.

Labanya, looking grave and anxious, said: "Still, it wouldn't be safe. Things spread so, from mouth to mouth—"

Nabendu replied with vehemence: "My name wouldn't suffer by appearing in the newspapers." So saying, he snatched the subscription list from Nilratan's hand, and signed away a thousand rupees. Secretly he hoped that the papers would not publish the news.

Labanya struck her forehead with her palm and gasped out: "what- have you-done?"

"Nothing wrong," said Nabendu boastfully.

"But—but—," drawled Lahanya, "the Guard-sahib of Sealdah Station, the shop-assistant at Whiteaway's, the syce-sahib of Hart Bros.these gentlemen might be angry with you, and decline to come to your Poojah dinner to drink your champagne, you know. Just think, they mightn't pat you on the back when you meet them again!"

"It wouldn't break my heart," Nabendu snapped out.

A few days passed. one morning Nabendu was sipping his tea, and glancing at a newspaper. Suddenly a letter signed "X" caught his eye. The writer thanked him profusely for his donation, and declared that the increase of strength the Congress had acquired by having such a man as he within its fold, was inestimable.

Alas, father Purnendu Sekhar! Was it to increase the strength of the Congress that you brought this wretch into the world?

But the cloud of misfortune had its silver lining. That he was not a mere cypher was clear from the fact that the Anglo-Indian community on the one side and the Congress on the other were each waiting patiently, eager to hook him, and land him on their own side. So Nabendu, beaming with pleasure, took the paper to his-sister-in-law, and showed her the letter. Looking as though she knew nothing about it, Labanya exclaimed in surprise: "Oh, what a pity! Everything has come out! Who-bore you such ill-will? Oh, how cruel of him, how wicked of him!"

Nabendu laughed out, saying: "Now-now-don't call him names, Labanya. I forgive him with all my heart, and bless him too."

A couple of days after this, an anti-Congress Anglo-Indian paper reached Nabendu through the post. There was a letter in it, signed "One 'who knows," and contradicting the above report. "Those who have the pleasure of Babu Nabendu Sekhar's personal acquaintance," the writer went on, "cannot for a moment believe this absurd libel to be true. For him to turn a Congresswalla is as impossible as it is for the leopard to change his spots. He is a man, of genuine worth, and neither a disappointed candidate for Government employ nor a briefless barrister. He is not one of those who, after a brief sojourn in England, return aping our dress and manners, audaciously try to thrust themselves on Anglo-Indian society, and finally go back in dejection. So there is absolutely no reason why Babu Nabendu Sekhar," etc., etc.

Ah, father Purnendu Sekhar! What a reputation you had made with the Europeans before you died!

'This letter also was paraded before his sister-in-law, for did it not assert that he was no mean, contemptible scallywag, but a man of real worth?

Labanya exclaimed again in feigned surprise: "Which of your friends wrote it now? Oh, come—is it the Ticket Collector, or the hide merchant, or is it the drum-major of the Fort?"

"You ought to send in a contradiction, I think," said Nilratan.

"Is it necessary?" said Nabendu loftily. "Must I contradict every little thing they choose to say against me?"

Labanya filled the room with a deluge of laughter. Nabendu felt a little disconcerted at this, and said: "Why? What's the matter?" She went on laughing, unable to check herself, and her youthful slender form waved to and fro. This torrent of merriment had the effect of overthrowing Nabendu completely, and he said in pitiable accents: "Do you imagine that I am afraid to contradict it?"

"Oh dear, no," said Labanya; "I was thinking that you haven't yet ceased trying to save that race-course of yours, so full of promise. While there is life, there is hope, you know."

"That's what I am afraid of, you think, do you? Very well, you shall see," said Nabendu desperately, and forthwith sat down to write his contradiction. When he had finished, Labanya and Nilratan read it through, and said: "It isn't strong enough. We must give it to them pretty hot, mustn't we?" And they kindly undertook to revise the composition.

Thus it ran: "When one connected to us by ties of blood turns our enemy he becomes far more dangerous than any outsider. To the Government of India, the haughty Anglo-Indians are worse enemies than the Russians or the frontier Pathans themselves-they are the impenetrable barrier, for ever hindering the growth of any bond of friendship between the Government and people of the country. It is the Congress which has opened up the royal road to a better understanding between the rulers and the ruled, and the Anglo-Indian papers have planted themselves like thorns across the whole breadth of that road," etc., etc.

Nabendu had inward fear as to the mischief this letter might do, but at the same time he felt elated at the excellence of its composition, which he fondly imagined to be his own. It was duly published, and for some days comments, replies, and rejoinders went on in various newspapers, and the air was full of trumpet-notes, proclaiming the fact that Nabendu had joined the Congress, and the amount of his subscription.

Nabendu, now grown desperate, talked as though he was a patriot of the fiercest type. Labanya laughed inwardly, and said to herself: "Well-well-you have to pass through the ordeal of fire yet."

One morning when Nabendu, before his bath, had finished rubbing oil over his chest, and was trying various devices to reach the inaccessible portions of his back, the bearer brought in a card inscribed with the name of the District Magistrate himself ! Good heavens! What would he do? He could not possibly go, and receive the Magistrate Sahib, thus oil-besmeared. He shook and twitched like a *koi*-fish, ready dressed for the frying pan. He finished his bath in a great hurry, tugged on his clothes somehow, and ran breathlessly to the outer apartments. The bearer said that the Sahib had just left after waiting for a long time. How much of the blame for concocting this drama of invented incidents may be set down to Labanya, and how much to the bearer, is a nice problem for ethical mathematics to solve.

Nabendu's heart was convulsed with pain within his breast, like the tail of a lizard just cut off. He moped like an owl all day long.

Labanya banished all traces of inward merriment from her face, and kept on inquiring in anxious tones: "What has happened to you? You are not ill, I hope?"

Nabendu made great efforts to smile and find a humorous reply. "How can there be," he managed to say, "any illness within your jurisdiction, since you yourself are the Goddess of Health?"

But the smile soon flickered out. His thoughts were: "I subscribed to the Congress fund to begin with, published a nasty letter in a newspaper, and on the top of that, when the Magistrate Sahib himself did me the honour to call on me, I kept him waiting. I wonder what he is thinking of me."

Alas, father Purnendu Sekhar, by an irony of fate I am made to appear what I am not.

The next morning, Nabendu decked himself in his best clothes, wore his watch and chain, and put a big turban on his head.

"Where are you off to?" inquired his sister-in-law.

"Urgent business," Nabendu replied. Labanya kept quiet.

Arriving at the Magistrate's gate, he took out his card-case.

"You cannot see him now," said the orderly peon icily.

Nabendu took out a couple of rupees from his pocket. The peon at once salaamed him and said: "There are five of us, sir." Immediately Nabendu pulled out a ten-rupee note, and handed it to him.

He was sent for by the Magistrate, who was writing in his dressing gown and room slippers. Nabendu salaamed him. The Magistrate pointed to a chain with his finger, and without raising his eyes from the paper before him said: "What can I do for you, Baba?"

Fingering his watch-chain nervously, Nabendu said in shaky tones: "Yesterday you were good enough to call at my place, sir—"

The Sahib knitted his brows, and, lifting just one eye from his paper, said: "I called at your place! Babu, what nonsense are you talking?"

"Beg your pardon, sir," faltered out Nabendu. "There has been a mistake-some confusion," and wet with perspiration, he tumbled out of the room somehow. And that night, as he lay tossing on his bed, a distant dream-like voice came into his ear with a recurring persistency: "Baba, you are a howling idiot."

On his way home, Nabendu came to the conclusion that the Magistrate denied having called, simply because he was highly offended.

So he explained to Labanya that he had been out purchasing rosewater. No sooner had he uttered the words than half-a-dozen chuprassis wearing the Collectorate badge made their appearance, and after *salaaming* Nabendu, stood there grinning.

"Have they come to arrest you because you subscribed to the Congress fund?" whispered Labanya with a smile.

The six peons displayed a dozen rows of teeth and said: *"Bakshish*—Babu-sahib."

From a side room Nilratan came out, and said in an irritated manner: *"Bakshish?* What for?"

The peons, grinning as before, answered: "The Baba-sahib went to see the Magistrate-so we have come for *bakshish."*

"I didn't know," laughed out Labanya, "that the Magistrate was selling rose-water nowadays. Coolness wasn't the special feature of his trade before."

Nabendu, in trying to reconcile the story of his purchase with his visit to the Magistrate, uttered some incoherent words which nobody could make sense of.

Nilratan spoke to the peons: "There has been no occasion for bakshish; you shan't have it."

Nabendu said, feeling very small: "Oh, they are poor men-what's the harm of giving them something?" And he took out a currency note. Nilratan snatched it away from Nabendu's hand, remarking:

"There are poorer men in the world—I will give it to them for you."

Nabendu felt greatly distressed that he was not able to appease these ghostly retainers of the angry Siva. When the peons were leaving, with thunder in their eyes, he looked at them, languishingly, as much as to say: 'You know everything, gentlemen; it is not my fault."

The Congress was to be held at Calcutta this year. Nilratan went down thither with his wife to attend the sittings. Nabendu accompanied them.

As soon as they arrived at Calcutta, the Congress party surrounded Nabendu, and their delight and enthusiasm knew no bounds. They cheered him, honoured him, and extolled him up to the skies. Everybody said that, unless leading men like Nabendu devoted themselves to the Cause, there was no hope for the country. Nabendu was disposed to agree with them, and emerged out of the chaos of mistake and confusion as a leader of the country. When he entered the Congress Pavilion on the first day, everybody stood up and shouted "Hip, hip. Hurrah!" in a loud outlandish voice, hearing which our Motherland reddened with shame to the root of her ears.

In due time the Queen's birthday came, and Nabendu's name was not found in the list of Rai Bahadurs.

He received an invitation from Labanya for that evening. When he arrived there, Labanya with great pomp and ceremony presented him with a robe of honour, and with her own hand put a mark of red sandal paste on the middle of his forehead. Each of the other sisters threw round his neck a garland of flowers woven by herself. Decked in a pink Sari and dazzling jewels, his wife Arunlekha was waiting in a side room, her face lit up with smiles and blushes. Her sisters rushed to her, and, placing another garland in her hand, insisted that she also should come and do her part in the ceremony, but she would not listen to it; and that principal garland, cherishing a desire for Nabendu's neck, waited patiently for the still secrecy of midnight.

The sisters said to Nabendu: To-day we crown thee King. Such honour will not be done to anybody else in Hindoostan."

Whether Nabendu derived any consolation from this, he alone can tell; but we greatly doubt it. We believe in fact, that he will become a Rai Bahadur before he has done, and the *Englishman* and the *Pioneer* will write heart-rending articles lamenting his demise at the proper time. So, in the meanwhile, Three Cheers for Babu Purnendu Sekhar! Hip, hip, hurrah—Hip, hip, hurrah—Hip, hip, hurrah!

The Renunciation

I

IT was a night of full moon early in the month of *phalgun.* The youthful spring was everywhere sending forth its breeze laden with the fragrance of mango-blossoms. The melodious notes of an untiring *papiya,*[1] concealed within the thick foliage of an old *lichi* tree by the side of a tank, penetrated a sleepless bedroom of the Mukerji family. There Hemanta now restlessly twisted a lock of his wife's hair round his finger, now beat her churi against her wristlet until it tinkled, now pulled at the chaplet of flowers about her head, and left it hanging at her face. His mood was that of an evening breeze which played about a favourite flowering shrub, gently shaking her now this side, now that, in the hope of rousing her to animation.

But Kusum sat motionless, looking out of the open widow, with eyes immersed in the moonlit depth of never-ending space beyond. Her husband's caresses were lost on her.

At last Hemanta clasped both the hands of his wife, and shaking them gently, said: "Kusum, where are you? A patient search through a big telescope would reveal you only as a small speck-you seem to have receded so far away. O, do come closer to me, dear. See how beautiful the night is."

Kusum turned her eyes from the void of space towards her husband, and said slowly: "I know a *mantra*[2] which could in one moment shatter this spring night and the moon into pieces."

"If you do," laughed Hemanta, "pray don't utter it. If any *mantra of* yours could bring three or four Saturdays during the week, and prolong the nights till 5 PM. the next day, say it by all means."

Saying this, he tried to draw his wife a little closer to him. Kusum, freeing herself from the embrace, said: "Do you know, to-night I feel a longing to tell you what I promised to reveal only on my death-bed.

Tonight I feel that I could endure whatever punishment you might inflict on me."

Hemanta was on the point of making a jest about punishments by reciting a verse from Jayadeva, when the sound of an angry pair of slippers was heard approaching rapidly. They were the familiar footsteps of his father, Harihar Mukerji, and Hemanta, not knowing what it meant, was in a flutter of excitement.

Standing outside the door Harihar roared out: "Hemanta, turn your wife out of the house immediately."

Hemanta looked at this wife, and detected no trace of surprise in her features. She merely buried her face within the palms of her hands, and, with all the strength and intensity of her soul, wished that she could then and there melt into nothingness. It was the same papiya whose song floated into the room with the south breeze, and no one heard it. Endless are the beauties of the earth-but alas, how easily everything is twisted out of shape.

1. One of the sweetest songsters in Bengal. Anglo-Indian writers have nicknamed it the "brain-fever bird," which is a sheer libel.
2. A set of magic words.

II

Returning from without, Hemanta asked his wife: "Is it true?"

"It is," replied Kusum.

"Why didn't you tell me long ago?"

"I did try many a time, and I always failed. I am a wretched woman."

"Then tell me everything now."

Kusum gravely told her story in a firm unshaken voice. She waded barefooted through fire, as it were, with slow unflinching steps, and nobody knew how much she was scorched. Having heard her to the end, Hemanta rose and walked out.

Kusum thought that her husband had gone, never to return to her again. It did not strike her as strange. She took it as naturally as any other incident of everyday life-so dry and apathetic had her mind become during the last few moments. Only the world and love seemed to her as a void and make-believe from beginning to end. Even the memory of the protestations of love, which her husband had made to her in days past, brought to her lips a,dry, hard, joyless smile, like a sharp cruel knife which had cut through her heart. She was thinking, perhaps, that the love which seemed to fill so much of one's life, which brought in its train such fondness and depth of feeling, which made even the briefest separation so exquisitely painful and a moment's union so intensely sweet, which seemed boundless in its extent and eternal in its duration, the cessation of which could not be imagined even in births to come—that this was that love! So feeble was its support? No sooner does the priesthood touch it than your "eternal" love crumbles into a handful of dust! Only a short while ago Hemanta had whispered to her: "What a beautiful night!" The same night was not yet at an end, the same *papiya* was still warbling, the same south breeze still blew into the room, making the bed-curtain shiver; the same moonlight lay on the bed next the open^ window, sleeping like a beautiful heroine exhausted with gaiety. All this was unreal! Love was more falsely dissembling than she her-self!

III

The next morning Hemanta, fagged after a sleepless night, and looking like one distracted, called at the house of Peari Sankar Ghosal. "What news, my son?" Peari Sankar greeted him.

Hemanta flaring up like a big fire, said in a trembling voice: "You have defiled our caste. You have brought destruction upon us. And you will have to pay for it." He could say no more? he felt choked.

"And you have preserved my caste, prevented my ostracism from the community, and patted me on the back affectionately!" said Peari Sankar with a slight sarcastic smile.

Hemanta wished that his Brahman-fury could reduce Peari Sankar to ashes in a moment, but his rage burnt only himself. Peari Sankar sat before him unscathed, and in the best of health.

"Did I ever do you any harm?" demanded Hemanta in a broken voice.

"Let me ask you one question," said Peari Sankar. "My daughter—my only child-what harm had she done your father'? You were very young then, and probably never heard. Listen, then. No, don't you excite yourself. There is much humour in what I am going to relate.

"You were quite small when my son-in-law Nabakanta ran away to England after stealing my daughter's jewels. You might truly remember the commotion in the village when he returned as a barrister five years later. Or, perhaps, you were unaware of it, as you were at school in Calcutta at the time. Your father, arrogating to himself the headship of the community, declared that if I sent my daughter to her husband's home, I must renounce her for good, and never again allow her to cross my threshold. I fell at your father's feet, and implored him, saying: 'Brother, save me this once. I will make the boy swallow cow-dung, and go through the *prayaschittaim* ceremony. Do take him back into caste.' But your father remained obdurate. For my part, I could not disown my only child, and, bidding good-bye to my village and my kinsmen, I betook myself to Calcutta. There, too, my troubles followed me. When I had made every arrangement for my nephew's marriage, your father stirred up the girl's people, and they broke the match off. Then I took a solemn vow that, if there was a drop of Brahmin blood flowing in my veins, I would avenge myself. You understand the business to some extent now, don't you? But wait a little longer. You well enjoy it, when I tell you the whole story; it is interesting.

"When you were attending college, one Bipradas Chatterji used to live next door to your lodgings. The poor fellow is dead now. In his house lived a child-widow called Kusum, the destitute orphan of a Kayestha gentleman. The girl was very pretty, and the old Brahmin desired to shield her from the hungry gaze of college students. But for a young girl to throw dust in the eyes of her old guardian was not at all a difficult task. She often went to the top of the roof, to hang her washing out to dry, and, I believe, you found your own roof best suited for your studies. Whether you two spoke to each other, when on your respective roofs, I cannot tell, but the girl's behaviour excited suspicion in the old man's mind. She made frequent mistakes in her household duties, and, like Parbati,[1] engaged in her devotions began gradually to renounce food and sleep. Some evenings she would burst into tears in the presence of the old gentleman, without any apparent reason.

"At last he discovered that you two saw each other from the roofs pretty frequently, and that you even went the length of absenting yourself from college to sit on the roof at midday with a book in your hand, so fond had you grown suddenly of solitary study. Bipradas came to me for advice, and told me

1. The Wife of Shiva the Destroyer.

everything. 'Uncle,' said I to him, 'for a long while you have cherished a desire to go on a pilgrimage to Benares. You had better do it now, and leave the girl in my charge. I will take care of her.'

"So he went. I lodged the girl in the house of Sripati Chatterji, passing him of as her father. What happened next is known to you. I feel a great relief to-day, having told you everything from the beginning. It sounds like a romance, doesn't it? I think of turning it into a book, and getting it printed. But I am not a writing-man myself. They say my nephew has some aptitude that way—I will get him to write it for me. But the best thing would be, if you would collaborate with him, because the conclusion of the story is not known to me so well."

Without paying much attention to the concluding remarks of Peari Sankar, Hemanta asked: "Did not Kusum object to this marriage?"

"Well," said Peari Sankar, "it is very difficult to guess. You know, my boy, how women's minds are constituted. When they say 'no," they mean 'yes.' During the first few days after her removal to the new home, she went almost crazy at not seeing you. You, too, seemed to have discovered her new address somehow, as you used to lose your way after starting for college, and loiter about in front of Sripati's house. Your eyes did not appear to be exactly in search of the Presidency College, as they were directed towards the barred windows of a private house, through which nothing but insects and the hearts of moon-struck young men could obtain access. I felt very sorry for you both. I could see that your studies were being seriously interrupted, and that the plight of the girl was pitiable also.

"One day I called Kusum to me, and said: Listen to me, my daughter. I am an old man, and you need feel no delicacy in my presence. I know whom you desire at heart. The young man's condition is hopeless too. I wish I could bring about your union.' At this Kusum suddenly melted into tears, and ran away. On several evenings after that, I visited Sripati's house, and, calling Kusum to me, discussed with her matters relating to you, and so I succeeded in gradually overcoming her shyness. At last, when I said that I would try to bring about a marriage, she asked me: 'How can it be?' Never mind,' I said, 'I would pass you off as a Brahmin maiden.' After a good deal of argument, she begged me to find out whether you would approve of it. `What nonsense!' replied I? 'the boy is well-nigh mad as it were-what's the use of disclosing all these complications to him? Let the ceremony be over smoothly and then—all's well that ends well. Especially, as there is not the slightest risk of its ever leaking out, why go out of the way to make a fellow miserable for life?'

"I do not know whether the plan had Kusum's assent or not. At times she wept, and at other times she remained silent. If I said, 'Let us drop it then,' she would become very restless. When things were in this state, I sent Sripati to you with the proposal of marriage; you consented without a moment's hesitation. Everything was settled.

"Shortly before the day fixed, Kusum became so obstinate that I had the greatest difficult in bringing her round again. 'Do let it drop, uncle,' she said to me constantly. 'What do you mean, you silly child,' I rebuked her; 'how can we back out now, when everything has been settled?'

" 'Spread a rumour that I am dead,' she implored. 'Send me away somewhere.'

" 'What would happen to the young man then?' said I. 'He is now in the seventh heaven of delight, expecting that his long-cherished desire would be fulfilled to-morrow; and to-day you want me to send him the news of your death? The result would be that to-morrow I should have to bear news of his death to you, and the same evening your death would be reported to me. Do you imagine, child, that I am capable of committing a girl-murder and a Brahmin-murder at my age?'

"Eventually the happy marriage was celebrated at the auspicious moment, and I felt relieved of a burdensome duty which I owed to myself. What happened afterwards you know best."

"Couldn't you stop after having done us an irreparable injury?" burst out Hemanta after a short silence. "Why have you told the secret now?

With the utmost composure, Peari Sankar replied: "when I saw that all arrangements had been made for the wedding of your sister, I said to myself: 'Well, I have fouled the caste of one Brahmin, but that was only from a sense of duty. Here, another Brahmin's caste is imperilled, and this time it is my plain duty to prevent it.' So I wrote to them saying that I was in a position to prove that you had taken the daughter of a sudra to wife."

Controlling himself with a gigantic effort, Hemanta said: "What will become of this girl whom I shall abandon now? Would you give her food and shelter?"

"I have done what was mine to do," replied Peari Sankar calmly. "It is no part of my duty to look after the discarded wives of other people. Anybody there? Get a glass of cocoanut milk for Hemanta Babu with ice in it. And some *pan* too"

Hemanta rose, and took his departure without waiting for this luxurious hospitality.

IV

It was the fifth night of the waning of the moon- and the night was dark. No birds were singing. The *lichi* tree by the tank looked like a smudge of ink on a background a shade less deep. The south wind was blindly roaming about in the darkness like a sleepwalker. The stars in the sky with vigilant unblinking eyes were trying to penetrate the darkness, in their effort to fathom some profound mystery.

No light shone in the bedroom. Hemanta was sitting on the side of the bed next the open window, gazing at the

darkness in front of him. Kusum lay on the floor, clasping her husband's feet with both her arms, and her face resting on them. Time stood like an ocean hushed into stillness. On the background of eternal night. Fate seemed to have painted this one single picture for all time-annihilation on every side, the judge in the centre of it, and the guilty one at his feet.

The sound of slippers was heard again. Approaching the door, Harihar Mukerji said: "You have had enough time; I can't allow you more. Turn the girl out of the house."

Kusum, as she heard this, embraced her husband's feet with all the ardour of a lifetime, covered them with kisses, and touching her forehead to them reverentially, withdrew herself.

Hemanta rose, and walking to the door, said:

"Father, I won't forsake my wife."

"What!" roared out Harihar, "would you lose your caste, sir?"

"I don't care for caste," was Hemanta's calm reply.

"Then you too I renounce."

The Cabuliwallah

MY five years' old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would stop her prattle, but I would not. To see Mini quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said: "Father! Ramdayal the door-keeper calls a crow a krow! He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the differences of language in this world, she was embarked on the full tide of another subject. "What do you think, Father? Bhola says there is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!"

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still making ready some reply to this last saying: "Father! what relation is Mother to you?"

"My dear little sister in the law!" I murmured involuntarily to myself, but with a grave face contrived to answer: "Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!"

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was hard at work on my seventeenth chapter, where Protap Singh, the hero, had just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and was about to escape with her by the third-storey window of the castle, when all of a sudden Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying: "A Cabuliwallah! a Cabuliwallah!" Sure enough in the street below was a Cabuliwallah, passing slowly along. He wore the loose soiled clothing of his people, with a tall turban; there was a bag on his back, and he carried boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what were my daughter's feelings at the sight of this man, but she began to call him loudly. "Ah!" I thought, "he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!" At which exact moment the Cabulīwallah turned, and looked up at the child. When she saw this, overcome by terror, she fled to her mother's protection, and disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The pedlar meanwhile entered my doorway, and greeted me with a smiling face.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first impulse was to stop and buy something, since the man had been called. I made some small purchases, and a conversation began about Abdurrahman, the Russians, the English, and the Frontier Policy.

As he was about to leave, he asked: "And where is the little girl, sir?"

And I, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Cabuliwallah and his bag. He offered her nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Cabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little sari was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor. "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna bit, 1 handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and slipped it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Cabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother catching .sight of the bright round object, had pounced on the child with: "Where did you get that eight-anna bit?"

"The Cabuliwallah gave it me," said Mini cheerfully.

"The Cabuliwallah gave it you!" cried her mother much shocked. "O Mini! how could you take it from him?"

I entering at the moment, saved her from impending disaster, and proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or second time, I found, that the two had met. The Cabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by a judicious bribery of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which afforded them much amusement. Seated in front of him, looking ,down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, Mini would ripple her face with laughter, and begin: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah! what have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer: "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the witticism! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Cabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: "Well, little one, and when are you going to the father-in-law's house?"

Now most small Bengali maidens have heard long ago about the father-in-law's house; but we, being a little new-fangled, had kept these things from our child, and Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied: "Are you going there?"

Amongst men of the Cabuliwallah's class, however, it is well known that the words father-in-law's house have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for *jail*, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy pedlar take my daughter's question. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman, "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this, and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams; the mountains, the glens, and the forests of his distant home, with his cottage in its setting, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds. Perhaps the scenes of travel conjure themselves up before me, and pass and repass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead such a vegetable existence that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt. In the presence of this Cabuliwallah I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbanned merchants carrying some of their queer old firearms, and some of their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see- But at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, imploring me to "beware of that man."

Mini's mother is unfortunately a very timid lady. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria, or cockroaches, or caterpillars, or an English sailor. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Cabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.

I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously, and ask me solemn questions.

Were children never kidnapped? Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Cabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?

I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year in the middle of January Rahmun, the Cabuliwallah, was in the habit of returning to his country, and as the time approached he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It would have seemed to an outsider that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then, in the corner of a dark room, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose - garmented, much bebagged man; but when Mini would run in smiling, with her "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" and the two friends, so far apart in age, would subside into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting my proof sheets in my study. It was chilly weather. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was almost eight o'clock, and the early pedestrians were returning home with their heads covered. All at once I heard an uproar in the street, and, looking out, saw Rahmun being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of curious boys. There were bloodstains on the clothes of the Cabuliwallah, and one of the policemen carried a knife. Hurrying out, I stopped them, and inquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having bought it, and that in the course of the quarrel Rahmun had struck him. Now in the heat of his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" Rahmun's face lighted up as he turned to her. He had no bag under his arrn to-day, so she could not discuss the elephant with him. She at once therefore proceeded to the next question: "Are you going to the father-in-law's house?" Rahmun laughed and said: "Just where I am going, little one!" Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands. "Ah," he said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahmun was sentenced to some years' imprisonment.

Time passed away, and he was not remembered. The accustomed work in the accustomed place was ours, and the thought of the once free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with girls. So much time indeed did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room. I was scarcely on speaking terms with her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn and we had made arrangement for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays. With Durga returning to Kailas, the light of our home also was to depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in the shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, there was a sense of ablution in the air, and the sun-rays looked like pure gold. So bright were they that they gave a beautiful radiance even to the sordid brick walls of our Calcutta lanes. Since early dawn to-day the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each beat my own heart throbbed. The wail of the tune, Bhairavi, seemed to intensify my pain at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married to-night.

From early morning noise and bustle had pervaded the house. In the courtyard the canopy had to be slung or, its bamboo poles; the chandeliers with their tinkling sound must be hung in each room and verandah. There was no end of hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when some one entered, saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahmun the Cabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He had no bag, nor the long hair, nor the same vigour that he used to have. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahmun?" I asked him. "Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail." The words struck harsh upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow, and my heart shrank within itself when I realised this, for I felt that the day would have. been better-omened had he not turned up.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Could you perhaps come another day?"

At once he turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said: may I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" it was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used to, calling "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. In fact, in memory of former days he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow from a countryman, for his own little fund was dispersed.

I said again: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see any one to-day."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, said "Good morning," and went out.

I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back, but I found he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me holding out his offerings, and said: "I brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?"

I took them and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said: "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your recollection. Do not offer me moneys-You have a little girl: I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring fruits to your child-not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. With great care he unfolded this, and smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. The impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of his own little daughter had been always on his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Cabuli fruit-seller, while I was—But no, what was I more than he? He

also was a father.

That impression of the hand of his little *Parbati* in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I would not listen. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with the sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood bashfully before me.

The Cabuliwallah looked a little staggered at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-in-law," and she could not reply to him as of old. She flushed up at the question, and stood before him with her bride-like face turned down.

I remembered the day when the Cabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahmun heaved a deep sigh, and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown in this long time, and that he would have to make friends with her anew. Assuredly he would not find her as he used to know her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sun streamed round us. But Rahmun sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a bank-note and gave it to him, saying: "Go back to your own daughter, Rahmun, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!"

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent at it. But to me the wedding-feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.

6

The Waterfall

6

The Waterfall

Scene. A mountainous country, with a road leading to the temple of Bhairva.[1] *The scene remains the same throughout the play.*

In the background is represented the upper framework of a big iron machine; opposite to this is the spire of the Bhairava temple, with its trident.

Ranajit, the king of Uttarakut, has his royal tent in the mango grove by the side of the road. He is resting there on the way to celebrate the evening festival, on the dark night of the moon. After twenty-five years of strenuous effort, his royal engineer, Bibhuti, has succeeded in building up an embankment across the waterfall called Muktadhara.[2]

The inhabitants of Uttarakut are seen. visiting the temple with their offerings and preparing to hold in the temple court-yard the festival, which is to celebrate the achievement of the royal engineer, Bibhuti.

The temple *devotees* of Bhairava are in the foreground. They are seen making a long circuit in religious procession round the temple. As they sing the praises of the god Bhairava, some are swinging their censers, some are beating the gongs, some are blowing the conch shells.

[The DEVOTEES sing, in procession,]

Victory to Him, the Terrible,
The, Lord of Destruction,
The uttermost Peace,
The Dissolver of doubts,
The Breaker of fetters,
Who carries us beyond all conflicts,
The Terrible, the Terrible!

[They go in.]

(A STRANGER comes with his offerings of worship and meets a CITIZEN of Uttarakut.]

STRANGER : What's that there put up against the sky? It is frightful!

CITIZEN: Don't you know? You're a stranger, I see; It's the Machine.

STRANGER : Machine! What Machine?

CITIZEN : The Royal Engineer, Bibhuti, has been working at it for the last twenty-five years. It's just been finished. A festival is now being held in honour of the occasion.

STRANGER : What's the object of the Machine?

CITIZEN : It has bound up the waterfall of Muktadhara.

STRANGER : What a monster! It looks like a dragon's skull with its fleshless jaws hanging down! The constant sight of it would make the life within you withered and dead.

CITIZEN : The life within us has got a thick hide to protect it! You needn't have any fear for us!

STRANGER : All the same, this isn't a thing to put up nakedly before the sun and stars. Can't you see how it seems to irritate the whole sky by its obtrusion?

CITIZEN : But aren't you going to attend the evening worship of Bhairava?

STRANGER : Yes, I've come out for that object. Every year I bring my offering at this time. But I've never seen such a monstrous obstruction in the sky before. Don't you think it's a sacrilege to allow it to overtop the spire of the Temple?

[He goes.]

[Enters a woman named AMBA, with white veil which covers her head and body and trails in the dust.]

AMBA : My Suman! My Suman! Won't my son Suman come back to me? You've all returned, but where is he?

CITIZEN : Who are you?

AMBA : I'm Amba of Janai village. Suman, my son, is the light of my eyes, the breath of my life,-my Suman!

CITIZEN : What's happened to him?

AMBA : I don't know where they've taken him. I'd gone to worship Bhairava, in the Temple; and when I came back, I found that he had been taken away.

CITIZEN : Then he must have been recruited for the work of building up the embankment.

AMBA : I've heard that they've taken him along this road to the west of the Hill of Gauri; and my eyesight doesn't reach so far. I can't see the way across it.

CITIZEN : What's the use of grieving! We're going to the Temple. It's a great day for us. You also must come.

AMBA : No, no! From that day, when I lost my son, I've dreaded going to the Temple. Let me tell you our worship never reaches Him. Someone filches it away, as it's carried to the shrine.

CITIZEN : Who's that?

AMBA : The one who's taken my Suman away from me! I don't know who it is, Suman! My Suman! My darling!

[They go.]

[The MESSENGER from ABHIJIT, the Crown Prince of Uttarakut, meets BIBHUTI, while he is on his way to the Temple]

MESSENGER : Bibhuti The Crown Prince has sent me to you.

1. One of the names of the God Shiva, meaning 'Terrible'.
2. 'Free Current.

BIBHUTI : What is his wish?

MESSENGER : You have been for a long time building up an embankment across the waterfall of Muktadhara. Over and over again it gave way, and men perished smothered with sand and earth; and others got washed away by the flood at last, today -

BIBHUTI : My object is accomplished and the sacrifice of their lives has met with its fulfilment.

MESSENGER : The inhabitants of Shiu-tarai are still ignorant of this fact. They cannot believe, that any man can deprive them of the water, which has been to them the gift of God.

BIBHUTI : God has given them the water; but He has given me the power to bind that water.

MESSENGER : They don't know that, within a week, their fields?

BIBHUTI:Why talk about their fields? What have I to do with their fields?

MESSENGER : Wasn't it your object to devastate their fields with drought?

BIBHUTI : My object was to make Man triumphant over the sands and water and stones, which conspired against him. I had not the time to trouble my mind about what would happen to some wretched maize fields of some wretched cultivator in some place or other.

MESSENGER : The Crown Prince asks you, if the time has not come at last for you to trouble your mind about it.

BIBHUTI : No! My mind is occupied with the contemplation of the majesty of the Machine.

MESSENGER : Cannot the cry of hunger interrupt that contemplation?

BIBHUTI : No! the pressure of water cannot break my embankment; the cry of hunger cannot sway my Machine.

MESSENGER : Aren't you afraid of curses ?

BIBHUTI : Curses ? -When labourers became scarce in Uttarakut. I had all the young men of over eighteen years of age from every house of Pattana village brought out by the King's command, and a great number of them never returned to their homes. My Machine has triumphed against the storm of mothers' curses. He who fights God's own power, is not afraid of man's malediction.

MESSENGER : The Crown Prince says that you have already attained the glory of a creation; and now it is time for you to attain a greater glory by demolishing that creation.

BIBHUTI : So long as my work remained unfinished, it was mine. But now that it is finished, it belongs to all Uttarakut. I have no longer the tight to demolish it.

MESSENGER : The Crown Prince declares, that he will take this right into his own hands.

BIBHUTI : Are these words from our own Crown Prince himself? Does he not belong to us?

MESSENGER : He says, that it has yet to be proved, whether God's Will has found its entrance into the Government of Uttarakut; the Machine must not stand between.

BIBHUTI : It is my mission to prove, by the force of the Machine, that God's throne is ours. Tell the Crown Prince, that no road is left open to make the Machine slacken its grip.

MESSENGER : The God, who breaks, does not need the broad road for his passage. The smallest holes, which escape our notice, are enough for him.

BIBHUTI : Holes! What do you know about them?

MESSENGER : Nothing. But He knows, who makes use of them.

[MESSENGER goes.]

[CITIZENS of Uttarakut, on their way to the Temple, meet BIBHUTI.]

FIRST CITIZEN : Engineer, you're a wonderful fellow! We never noticed when you got ahead of us!

SECOND CITIZEN : That's ever been his habit. Nobody knows how he wins in the race. That shaven-headed Bibhuti of our Chabua village got his ears pulled along with ourselves at the village school. And yet he's done such wonders, surpassing us all!

THIRD CITIZEN: Hallo, Gobru! why'd you stand there, basket in hand, with your mouth wide open? Is this the first time you've seen Bibhuti? Bring out the garlands. Let's garland him.

BIBHUTI : No, no! What's the use of doing that?

THIRD CITIZEN : Why do you say 'no'? If the length of your neck could keep pace with your greatness, it'd grow like a camel's and we'd load it up to the tip of your nose with garlands.

SECOND CITIZEN: Harish, our drummer, hasn't yet arrived.

FIRST CITIZEN : That man's the very prince of the sluggards! He needs a good beating on the drum of his back.

THIRD CITIZEN : Nonsense, he can beat the drum far better than we can.

FOURTH CITIZEN : The idea came to me, that we might borrow the chariot from Samanta, to drive Bibhuti on it to the Temple. But we hear that the king himself will go walking to the temple. Let's carry him on our shoulders.

BIBHUTI : No, not This is too much!

FIFTH CITIZEN: Not at all! You were born in the lap of Uttarakut, and now you've got to be raised on its shoulders.

[They all take him up and sing]

The Song of the Machine.
We salute the Machine, the Machine!
Loud with its rumbling of wheels,
Quick with its thunder flame,
Fastening its fangs
into the breast of the world.
Hurling against obstructions
its fiery defiance
That melts iron, crushes rocks,
And drives the inert from its rest.
We salute the Machine, the Machine.'
Now stolidly stable, with timber and stones.
Now light and free, like a storm cloud.
Sailing across earth, water and sky.
The Machine, whose claws wrench bare.
The entrails of the earth.
Whose magic net captures in its meshes.
The elements elusive and subtle.
We salute the Machine, the Machine.'
[They all go out.]
[Enter King RANAJIT and his MINISTER from the Camp.]

RANAJIT : You ever failed thoroughly to subdue our subjects in Shiutarai. And now, Bibhuti has made it possible at last by controlling the waterfall, Muktadhara. But how is it, that you do not show any sign of elation? Is it jealousy!

MINISTER : Pardon me, Your Majesty. It is not our business to wrestle with the clay and stones by the help of spades and pickaxes. Our weapon is diplomacy. We deal with men's minds. It was I who advised you to send the Crown Prince to Shiu-tarai; and the embankment, which could have been built up by this policy, would have controlled a turbulent force with greater security and permanence than this one before us.

RANAJIT : Yet what was the result? They have not paid taxes for two years. Famines are not unusual among them, yet in former days they had never left their dues unpaid.

MINISTER : Something more valuable than taxes was being realised at the very moment when you ordered the Crown Prince back. It is not a sound policy to despise the small. When things are intolerable, then the small becomes great with the power of their suffering.

RANAJIT : You change the tune of your advice, time after time. I distinctly remember how you have often said to me that it is easiest to put pressure upon those, who are down below you, from the vantage ground of the higher position; and that foreign subjects must always be under that pressure.

MINISTER : Yes, I did say that; but the circumstances then were different; therefore my advice was timely. But now;

RANAJIT : It was against my wish to send the Crown Prince to Shiu-tarai.

MINISTER : Why, Sire?

RANAJIT : Distance has its dignity. Familiarity diminishes it. You can win the hearts of your own people through love; but aliens must be won over by fear.

MINISTER : You forget. Sire, what was the real reason for sending the Crown Prince to Shiu-tarai. For some days, we had noticed in him a spirit of restlessness, had we suspected that, by some chance, he had come to know that he was not born to the royal house, but picked up near the source of this waterfall. Therefore in order to keep his mind engaged,-

RANAJIT : Yes, I know. He began to visit the source of the waterfall alone, in the night. Once I surprised him, and asked him what was the matter, and why he was there. He said, 'I find my mother's tongue in the murmurs of this water.'

MINISTER : Once I asked him what had come over him, and why he was so often absent from the palace. He answered, that he had come into the world to open out roads: this was the inner meaning of his life which he must fulfil.

RANAJIT : The prophecy, that he would be the ruler of a great empire,is no longer credible.

MINISTER : But, Sire, it was the *guru* of your guru who came here specially for the purpose of telling you this. He made that prediction.

RANAJIT : He must have been mistaken. The Crown Prince, in all his moods, has always made me suffer loss. By his last fit of folly, wantonly destroying the wall across the Nandi Pass, he has undone the work in a few days which our forefathers took years to complete. And now there will be nothing to prevent the wool and other products of Shiu-tarai from. finding their outlet in markets beyond our own kingdom. This will raise the price of food and clothing in Uttarakut.

MINISTER : You must remember that he is young and takes an onesided view of his duty, having only the good of Shiu-tarai in view.

RANAJIT : But that is what I call rebellion against his own people. I am sure that Vairagi[1] Dhananjai, of Shiu-tarai, whose business it is to incite our subjects against us, must have had a hand in this business. We must throttle this man with his own rosary. We must capture him.

MINISTER : I dare not contradict. But I am sure you know, that there are dangers which are better left free, than captured,

RANAJIT : You need not trouble yourself about it.

MINISTER : No Sire! I want you to trouble about it.

[Enters WARDER.]

WARDER : Sire, your uncle, Viswajit, of Mohangarh, has come.

RANAJIT : There is another of them! He is the worst of all those, who have acted their part in spoiling the Crown Prince. The man, who is a relation and yet an alien, is like a hump on the back of a hunchback. It always follows you. You cannot cut it off, and yet it is a trouble to bear it. What is that?

MINISTER : The devotees have come out, and are going

round the temple in procession.

[The DEVOTEES come and sing fire rest of their song.]

Victory to the fearful flame.
That tears the heart of darkness
That burns to ashes things that are dead,
Victory to him, whose voice thunders forth truth, Whose right arm smites the unrighteous, Whose guidance leads mortals across death.
The Terrible!

[They go away.]

1. A mendicant ascetic singer.

[VISWAJIT, *the* uncle of RANAJIT, *enters]*

RANAJIT : My greeting to you! I never expected the good fortune of your coming and joining with us to-night in out worship.

VISWAJIT : I have come to warn you that the God Bhairava will reject the worship you bring to him to-night.

RANAJIT : Such words from you are an insult to our great Festival.

VISWAJIT : Festival? For what? For shutting up the water, that has ever poured forth from the cup of the God of Gods, so that all who thirst may drink? Why did you do it?

RANAJIT : To defeat our enemies!

VISWAJIT : Are you not afraid of making an enemy of your God himself?

RANAJIT : Our victory is His. He is the Patron God of Uttarakut. Therefore, He has allowed His own boon to be withdrawn for our sake. He will bring Shiu-tarai to the feet of Uttarakut, piercing its heart with the spear of thirst.

VISWAJIT : If that is true, then the worship you offer to Him is no worship at all, but merely wages.

RANAJIT : Uncle, you are partial to the outsiders, and against your own kith and kin. It is through your lessons that Abhijit has failed fully to accept the duties of the kingdom of Uttarakut which are to be his hereafter.

VISWAJIT : Through my lessons!-Was there not a time when I belonged to your party? After your actions had caused a rebellion in Pattana, was it not I who crushed it, desolating the whole place' Then came that boy Abhijit into my heart. He came like a flash to light; and those whom I had struck, blinded by the darkness of my heart-I could see them for the first time in their full humanity. You accepted him into your home, because you found in him the signs of a World Emperor; and now you try to keep him tied to the limits of the throne of Uttarakut.

RANAJIT : I am sure that it was you who divulged to him the secret, it was you, who told him that he was a foundling picked up at the source of the waterfall, Muktadhara.

VISWAJIT : Yes, I did. It was on the night of the Lamp Festival in my palace I found him standing alone in the balcony, gazing at the summit of Gauri. I asked him, what he was looking at. He said that he saw the vision of the roads of the future; the roads which had not yet been built across the difficult passes of the mountains; the roads that would bring the distant near. When I heard him, I said to myself, that nothing could keep such a child captive, whom some homeless mother had given birth to near the waterfall, which seeks its home in the Unknown. I could not contain myself and I said to him, - 'My child, that bare mountain accepted you in its arms when you were born by the roadside. The welcome music of the home was not for you at your birth.'

RANAJIT : Now, I understand.

VISWAJIT : What do you understand?

RANAJIT : Abhijit has lost his feeling? attachment for our royal house ever since the time he heard this news from you. In order to show this disaffection the first thing he did was to break the wall of the fort of Nandi and open out the road of Nandi Pass.

VISWAJIT : What harm was there in that? The open road belongs to all,-as much to Uttarakut as to Shiu-tarai.

RANAJIT : Uncle, I have borne with you for long, but no more of this! You must leave my kingdom!

VISWAJIT : I have not the power to leave. you. But if you leave me, I shall merely suffer it.

[Goes.]

[Enters AMBA]

AMBA : Who are you there? The sun is about to set, but my Suman hasn't yet come back.

RANAJIT : Who are you?

AMBA : I'm nobody. He, who was my all in all, has been taken away from me along this path. And has this path no end? Does my Suman walk and ever walk on, into the West, across the peak of Gauri, where the sun is sinking, the light is sinking, and everything is sinking?

RANAJIT : [to his MINISTER] . It seems that

MINISTER : Yes, Sire, it must be connected with the building up of the embankment.

RANAJIT : [to AMBA] . Set your mind free from all grief. I assure you, your son has received the last great gift of life.

AMBA : If that were true, he would have brought it to my hands in the evening. For I'm his mother.

RANAJIT : He will bring it. That evening time has not yet come.

AMBA : May your words turn out to be true! I shall wait for him on this road leading to the temple.

[She goes.]

[A SCHOOLMASTER enters, with a group of BOYS.]

SCHOOLMASTER: These wretched boys are in for a good caning, I can see. Shout, with your loudest voices boys: 'Salve Imperator.'

BOYS: 'Salve Im -'

SCHOOLMASTER: 'Perator!'

BOYS: 'Perator!'

SCHOOLMASTER: Salve imperator Imperatorum!'

BOYS : Salve Imperatorum!'

SCHOOLMASTER : '- Imperatorum!'

BOYS: Imperatorum!'

RANAJIT : Where are you going[7]

SCHOOLMASTER : Your Majesty is about to confer special honour on the Royal Engineer, Bibhuti; and I am taking my boys to the festival, in order to share in the rejoicing. I do not want my boys to miss any opportunity of participating in the glory of Uttarakut.

RANAJIT : Do these boys know what Bibhuti has done?

THE BOYS *[clapping their hands and jumping].* Yes! Yes! We know. He has shut up the drinking water of the Shiu-tarai people!

RANAJIT : Why has he shut it up'

BOYS : To give them a good lesson.

RANAJIT : What for?

BOYS : To make them smart!

RANAJIT : Why?

BOYS : Because they are bad!

RANAJIT : Why bad?

BOYS : Oh they are terribly bad. Everybody knows it!

RANAJIT : Then, you do not know why they are bad?

SCHOOLMASTER: Certainly, they know it, Your Majesty. [To the Boys] What's happened to you, you blockheads? Haven't you-Haven't you,-in your books?—Haven't you-in your books? - [In a low voice whispering,] Their religion is rotten!

BOYS : Yes! Yes! Their religion is rotten!

SCHOOLMASTER: And they are not like us,-come, answer, boys; don't you remember [pointing to his nose].

BOYS : Yes, they haven't got high-bridged noses.

SCHOOLMASTER: Good! Of course you know what has been proved by our Professor. What does a high-bridged nose denote?

BOYS : The greatness of the race!

SCHOOLMASTER: Good! Good! And what is the mission of the greater races?-Speak out! They conquer— speak out!-They conquer,-the world,-for themselves. Is not that so?

BOYS : Yes! They conquer the world for themselves.

SCHOOLMASTER: Is there a single case in which Uttarakut has been defeated in a war?

BOYS : *No*, never!

SCHOOLMASTER: You all know how the grandfather of our king, with only 293 soldiers, put to flight 31,700 barbarians from the South. Isn't that true, boys?

BOYS : Yes!

SCHOOLMASTER : Your Majesty may rest assured that these very boys will one day -be a terror to all those who have the misfortune to be born outside our boundaries. I shall be false to my vocation as a schoolmaster if this does not happen. I never allow myself to forget for one moment the great responsibility which we teachers have. We build up *men!* Your statesmen merely use them.-And yet Your Majesty should take the trouble to compare the pay which *they* draw, with what we get.

MINISTER : But those very students are your best reward.

SCHOOLMASTER: Wonderfully uttered! Indeed, they are our best reward! Beautiful! But, Sir, food is becoming so dear now-a-days. For instance, the butter from cow's milk was once.

MINISTER : You needn't go on. I shall ponder over this question of the butter from cow's milk. Now you may take your leave.

[The SCHOOLMASTER, with his BOYS, departs.]

RANAJIT : Inside the skull of this schoolmaster of yours, there is nothing but the butter made of cow's milk.

MINISTER : Nevertheless, Sire, such people are useful. He loyally repeats the lesson, day after day, according to the instruction that he has received. If he had more brains, such a thing as this would not be possible.

RANAJIT : What is that in the sky?

MINISTER : Have you forgotten about it[7] That is the top of Bibhuti's Machine.

RANAJIT : I have never seen it so clear as it is today.

MINISTER : The storm this morning has cleared the sky. That is why it is so distinct.

RANAJIT : Don't you see how the sun from behind it looks red with anger, and the Machine appears like the menacing fist of a giant. It has not been at all proper to raise it so high.

MINISTER : The thing appears like a spasm of agony in the heart of the sky.

RANAJIT : It is time for us to go to the temple.

[They go.]

[A second group of CITIZEN of Uttarakut enters.]

FIRST CITIZEN: Don't you notice, how Bibhuti seeks to evade us nowadays? He tries to rub off from his skin. the fact that he was bred up along with ourselves. One day he'll realize, that it's not good for the sword to grow longer than the sheath.

SECOND CITIZEN: Whatever you may- say, Bibhuti has upheld the reputation of Uttarakut.

FIRST CITIZEN :Stop that nonsense? You're making too much of him! This embankment, which has cost him all his resources, has given way ten times at least.

THIRD CITIZEN : Who knows that it, won't give way once again?

FIRST CITIZEN: Have you noticed the mound on the northern side.

SECOND CITIZEN: What about it?

FIRST CITIZEN : Don't you know? Everybody, who has seen it,, says-

SECOND CITIZEN : What? Tell me..

FIRST CITIZEN : You are a simpleton! Don't you know, that from one end to the other, it's-Oh, rubbish!

SECOND CITIZEN : Do explain, it to me a little more clearly.

FIRST CITIZEN : Wait a while. It'll explain itself, when all of a sudden -

[Ends with a gesture.]

SECOND CITIZEN : Terrible! All of a sudden?

FIRST CITIZEN : Yes! Jagru will be able to tell you all about it. He has measured every inch of it.

SECOND CITIZEN: That's the best thing about Jagru. He has a wonderfully cool head. When everybody's delirious with admiration, he quietly brings out his measuring tape.

THIRD CITIZEN : Some people say that all the science of Bibhuti -

FIRST CITIZEN : Yes, yes! It's stolen from Benkot Varma. He was a great man, indeed! Yes indeed, he was great! There was nobody like him. What brains! What prodigious brain power! - And yet Bibhuti gets all the rewards, and that poor man, - he actually died of starvation.

THIRD CITIZEN : Only of starvation?

FIRST CITIZEN : Whether from starvation or from some food from some hand,-who knows? But what's the use of discussing it? Someone may overhear what we're saying. There are all kinds of scandalmongers - in this land. Our people can't bear to hear good of others.

SECOND CITIZEN: Whatever you may say, he's a-

FIRST CITIZEN : What wonder is there in that. Just consider in what soil he flourished. That Chabua village of ours,- don't you realize, it has given birth to my great grandfather?- Of course, you know his name.

SECOND CITIZEN:Of course! Everybody in Uttarakut knows him. He's that - what do you call it?

FIRST CITIZEN : Bhaskar. There was none in the whole kingdom of Uttarakut, who could come near to him in making snuff. The great Rajah Satrujit couldn't pass a day without buying snuff from him.

THIRD CITIZEN : Let's hurry to the temple now. We belong to the same village as Bibhuti. Our place will be on his right side.

[BATU from behind the screen cries out: 'Don't go, friend! Don't go! Turn away from this path!']

SECOND CITIZEN: There he is,-old Bat'

[BATU enters with a torn blanket on his back and a crooked stick in his hand

FIRST CITIZEN : Where are you going, Batu?

BATU : I warn you, friends! Don't take that path! Go back, while there's time!

SECOND CITIZEN: Why?

BATU : They'll sacrifice; sacrifice human beings! They've taken away by force two of my grandsons, who never returned.

THIRD CITIZEN : Sacrifice? Before whom?

BATU : Before the Demon Thirst!

SECOND CITIZEN: Who's that'

BATU : The Demon whose dry tongue grows and grows, like a flame of fire fed by the oil.

FIRST CITIZEN : Madman! We're going to Bhairava's temple. Where's your Demon Thirst there?

BATU : Haven't you heard the news? They're going to dethrone Bhairava today, and the Demon Thirst will occupy his altar.

SECOND CITIZEN: Hold your tongue madman! The people of Uttarakut will cut you to pieces, if they hear you talk like this.

BATU : They're throwing mud at me, and the children are pelting me with stones. Everybody's saying, that my grandsons were fortunate in being able to give up their lives.

FIRST CITIZEN : That's true!

BATU : True? If the offer of life does not bring life in return;-if with death you gain death itself; -then Bhairava will never allow such an, utter loss! I warn you, friends, never take that path!

[He goes.]

SECOND CITIZEN: I must confess his words seem to send a shiver of cold through my blood.

FIRST CITIZEN : Ranju, you're a great coward. Let's go!

[They all go.]

[Enter the Crown Prince ABHIJIT and the Prince SANJAY.]

SANJAY : I cannot understand why you are leaving our palace.

ABHIJIT : You will not fully understand it. For how are you to know that my life is a stream which must have its free course over the stones of the king's house.

SANJAY : We all have noticed that you have been feeling restless for some time past. It seemed as if the bond that kept you tied to us was slackening every day. Has it snapped at last?

ABHIJIT : Sanjay! Look at that image of the sunset over the peak of Gauri. Some bird of fire has spread its wings and is flying towards the night, the setting sun has drawn in the sky the picture of my own life's adventure.

SANJAY : To me the picture is different. Look how the top of that Machine has pierced the hear of this evening. It seems like a stricken bird falling head foremost into the valley of night! I do not like this omen! Now is the time for rest. Come into the palace.

ABHIJIT : Where there is an obstruction, there can be no rest.

SANJAY : How have you discovered, after all these days, this obstruction of which you are speaking?.

ABHIJIT : I discovered it when I heard that they had bound the waters of Muktadhara.

SANJAY : I do not understand the meaning of these words.

ABHIJIT : Every man has the mystery of his inner life somewhere written in the outer world. The secret of my own life has its symbol in that waterfall of Muktadhara. When I saw its movements shackled I received a shock at the very root of my being; I discovered that this throne of Uttarakut is an embankment built up across my own life's current. And I have come out into the road to set free its course.

SANJAY : Take me with you as your companion!

ABHIJIT : No! You have to find out your own course.
If you follow me, then I shall only obscure it-your own true path.

SANJAY : Do not be so hard! You hurt me!

ABHIJIT : You know my heart; and you will understand me even when I pain you.

SANJAY : I do not wish to question you as to the source from which your call has come. But, Prince, now it is evening, and the music of the nightfall comes floating from the palace tower. Has not this also its call? All that is stern and strenuous may have its glory. But all that is sweet has also its value.

ABHIJIT : The pursuit of the hard is for paying the price of the sweet.

SANJAY : Do you remember, the other day, you were surprised to find a white lotus before your seat, where you have your prayer? Some one had gathered that lotus early in the morning before you were awake, and you were not told who it was. Can you ignore, at a moment like this, the divine gift which lies, hidden in the heart of that little incident? Does not the face of that timid creature haunt your memory, who hid herself, but not her worship?

ABHIJIT : Yes, it does! And for the sake of that very love, which is in this world, I cannot tolerate this hideousness. It kills the music of the earth, and laughs its sinister laughter, displaying its rows of steel teeth in the sky. Because I love the paradise of the gods, I am ready to fight the Titans who menace it.

SANJAY : Cannot you see the picture of an infinite sorrow in the twilight glow, clinging to that purple hill?

ABHIJIT : Yes, my heart fills with tears. I never boast of harshness as heroic. Look at that tiny bird, sitting on the topmost branch of the pine tree, all alone. I do not know whether it will go to its nest, or take its journey across the night to a distant forest; but the sight of that lonely bird gazing at the last ray of the setting sun fills my heart with a sadness which is sweet. How beautiful is this world! Here is my salutation to all that has made my life sweet.

[Enters BATU]

BATU : They wouldn't let me go on, but turned me back with blows.

ABHIJIT : What has happened to you, Batu? There is a wound on your forehead, from which blood flows.

BATU : I came out to warn them; I cried out to them to leave that path and go back.

ABHIJIT : Why?

BATU : Don't you know, Prince? They're going to install, upon the altar of the Machine, the Demon Thirst. They will sacrifice human beings to this Demon.

SANJAY : What is this wild talk?

BATU : They've already poured out the blood of my own two grandsons at the foundation of this altar. I'd hoped that this shrine of sin would break into pieces with its own load of evil. But that has not yet come to pass; and the God Bhairava has not yet awakened out of sleep.

ABHIJIT : Yes, the shrine will break in pieces. The time has come!

BATU : [coming close to him, whispers]. Then you must have heard,-heard the call of Bhairava?

ABHIJIT : Yes, I have heard.

BATU : Then there is no escape for you?

ABHIJIT : No escape for me!

BATU : Don't you see how the blood flows from my wound?

Will you be able to bear it, Prince, when your heart bleeds?

ABHIJIT : By the grace of Bhairava, I shall bear it.

BATU : When everybody becomes your enemy? When your own people renounce you?

ABHIJIT: I must bear it!

BATU : Then there's no fear!

ABHIJIT : No fear for me.

BATU : Good! Keep me in your mind, I'm also bound for that path. You'll be able to recognise me, even in the dark, by this mark of blood, which Bhairava Himself has painted on my forehead.

[BATU goes.]

[Enters the King's Guard, UDDHAB.]

UDDHAB : [to the Crown Prince*]*. Sire, what made you open out the road along the Nandi Pass?

ABHIJIT : To save the people of Shiu-tarai from perpetual famine.

UDDHAB : Our King is kind! Is he not always ready to help them?

ABHIJIT : When the right hand in its miserliness shuts out the path of plenitude the generosity of the left hand is no help at all. For this I have freed the passage of provisions in Shiu-tarai. I have no respect for that mercy, which keeps poverty dependent on it.

UDDHAB : The King says, that you have taken the bottom out of Uttarakut's food vessel by breaking down the fort of the Nandi Pass.

ABHIJIT : I have set Uttarakut free from remaining for all time a parasite of Shiu-tarai.

UDDHAB : It was extremely rash of you. The King has heard the news. I dare not say any more. Leave this place at once, if you can do so. It's not safe for me to be seen talking with you on the road.

[UDDHAB goes.]

[Enters AMBA.]

AMBA : Suman, my darling! Have none of you followed that path, along which they took my Suman?

ABHIJIT : Have they taken your son away?

AMBA : Yes, towards the West, where the sun sinks, where the days come to their end.

ABHIJIT : My journey is also along that path.

AMBA : Then remember an unfortunate woman like me. When you meet him, tell him that mother is waiting.

ABHIJIT : Yes, I shall tell him.

[AMBA *goes out.]*

[The Devotees of Bhairava enter singing.]

Victory to Him, who is Terrible!
The Lord of Destruction!
The uttermost Peace!
The Dissolver of doubts,
The Breaker of fetters!
Who carries us beyond all conflicts.
The Terrible! The Terrible!

[They go.]

[Enters a General, BIJAYPAL.]

BIJAYPAL : Princes, accept my humble salutation. I come from the King.

ABHIJIT : What is his command?

BIJAYPAL : I must tell it to you in secret.

SANJAY : [holding ABHIJIT *his hand).* Why in secret?- Secret even from me?]

BIJAYPAL : Such is my instruction. I beg you, Crown Prince, to enter the tent.

SANJAY : I must accompany him. [Attempts to do so]

BIJAYPAL : No! That will be against the wishes of the King.

SANJAY : Then I shall wait for him at this road side.

[ABHIJIT, followed by BIJAYPAL, goes towards *the tent]*

[Enters a FLOWER-SELLER.]

FLOWER-SELLER [to SANJAY]: Sir, who is this man, Bibhuti, of Uttarakut?

SANJAY : Why do you seek him?

FLOWER-SELLER: I'm a stranger coming from Deotali, and I've heard that they are throwing flowers on his path in Uttarakut. He must be some saint. So I've brought these flowers from my own garden to offer to him.

SANJAY : He is not a saint, but a clever man.

FLOWER-SELLER:What has he done?

SANJAY : He has bound up our waterfall.

FLOWER-SELLER : Is all this worship for that? Will the binding of the waterfall serve God's purpose?

SANJAY : No. It will fetter God's own designs.

FLOWER-SELLER : I don't understand.

SANJAY : It is good for you not to understand it. Go back again! *[She* starts to go.] Stay, hear me! Will you sell that white lotus to me?

FLOWER-SELLER : I can't sell this flower, which I had already offered in my mind to some saint.

SANJAY : The saint, whom I venerate more than any one else, shall have this.

FLOWER-SELLER : Then take it. *[He offers money.]* No!

No price for this! Give the Father my salutation, and tell him that I'm the poor woman of Deotali, who sells flowers.

[She goes.]

[Enters BIJAYPAL.]

SANJAY :Where is the Crown Prince?

BIJAYPAL : He is a captive in the tent.

SANJAY : The Crown Prince a captive! What arrogance!

BIJAYPAL : Here is the warrant from the King.

SANJAY : Whose conspiracy is this? Let me go to him for a moment.

BIJAYPAL : Pardon me, I cannot.

SANJAY : Then arrest me, also! I am a rebel!

BIJAYPAL : I have not the instructions.

SANJAY : I go myself to force from him the instructions. *[He goes some way, and then returns.]* Give this white lotus to the Crown Prince, in my name.

[They go out]

[Enters the Bairagi, DHANANJAY of Shiu-tarai *with* citizens whoare his followers from Shiu-tarai.]

DHANANJAY : [to *one of his followers].* You look as pale as a ghost! Why? What's the matter?

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Master, the blows from Chandapal, the King's brother-in-law, have become intolerable!

[The Shiu-tarai Leader, GANESH, *enters]*

GANESH : Father, give me your orders! Let me snatch away the baton from that scoundrel, Chandapal, and prove to him what a blow can really mean.

DHANANJAY : You had better try to prove what a 'no blow' can really mean! The helm's not for beating the waves, but for conquering them by keeping itself steady.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Then, what's your wish?

DHANANJAY : Raise your head! Say that nothing hurts you, and then the hurt will receive its death blow.

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: It's difficult to say that nothing hurts *me!*

DHANANJAY : The true man within us is a flame of fire. He consumes all hurts in light. Only the brute beast is hurt. The brute beast is flesh, and it goes whining when it is struck-Why do you stand with your mouths gaping wide open? Cannot you follow my words!

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Father, we understand you! It doesn't matter if we fail to understand your words.

DHANANJAY : Then it's past cure.

GANESH : It takes a most tedious time to understand words. But when we understand you, we are saved at once.

DHANANJAY : Saved at once? But what about later on?

GANESH : We know that we must come to you for our shelter, and that shows that we understand.

DHANANJAY : No, not in the least. That's why your eyes are still red with passion, and your voice lacks music. Shall I give you the proper tune?

[He sings.]

Let your hurts come upon *me. Master!*
More, if you wish, and yet morel
You cowards! In order to avoid being hurt, you either hurt others, or else run away. Both are the same. Both are for the brute beasts.

[He sings again.]

I hide myself, I run away.
I try to avoid you in fear.
Capture me, and take all that I have.

Look here, children! I an: going to make rely final reckoning with the great god, Mrityunjay the Conqueror of death I want to say to him. 'Try me, and see if blows hurt me, or not.' I must not in this voyage burden my boat with those who fear and those who frighten others.

[He sings again.]

May this be my last stake at the game.
Let me see whether I win or thou!
In the markets, in the highways, among the crowds,
I had my mirth and I laughed
Let me see if at last you can make me weep!

ALL [Crying out together] : Bravo, Father-' Let me see if at last you can make me weep.'

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN : Tell us where are you going?

DHANANJAY : To the King's Festival.

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: But the King's Festival is not for you. Why do you go there at all?

DHANANJAY : I must make my name known in the King's Court.

FOURTH SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: When once he catches you then he'll- But, no! that must never be!

DHANANJAY : Let it be, man! Let it be to the full!

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: You're not afraid of the King, Master. But we dread him!

DHANANJAY: That's only because, in your secret hearts, you want to hurt. But I don't want to hurt, and therefore never fear.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Very well then. We also shall accompany you!

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Yes! We shall go to the King's Court.

DHANANJAY : What will you ask the King?

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: There are so many things to ask But the question is, which of them will be granted.

DHANANJAY : Why not ask for the kingdom?

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN : Father, you're joking!

DHANANJAY : Not at all! If the kingdom belonged to the king alone and not also to the subjects, then the hopping about of that onelegged kingdom might make you jump with fright; but it would bring tears to the eyes of God!-You must claim the kingdom for the sake of the king himself.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: But when they come to push us out?

DHANANJAY : The push from the king will come back upon the king himself, if your claim has truth.

[He Sings.]

I forget, and forget again, my Lord,
That Thou callest us to Thine own seat. -

Shall I tell you the truth, children? So long as you don't recognise the seat to be His, your claim to the throne will be futile.

[He sings again.]

Thy door-keepers do not know us,
They shut the gate against our face. We stand outside
Thy house.

How are the door-keepers to recognise us? The dust has settledupon the mark of royalty on our foreheads. We can show nothing to proveour claim.

[He sings once more.]

Thou hast given us life with Thine own hand,
And with it Thy crown of honour. But greed, fear
and shame smudge it with grimy touch,
And Thy gift is obscured day- by day.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Whatever you may say, we don't understand why you're going to the King's Court.

DHANANJAY : Shall I tell you why? It's because I have misgivings in my mind about you.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Why, Father?

DHANANJAY : The more you cling to me, while trying to swim, the more you forget your lessons in swimming, and also keep dragging me down. I must take my leave of you and go where nobody follows me.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: But the king won't easily let you go!

DHANANJAY : Why should he let me go?

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: We can never remain quiet, if they molest you!

DHANANJAY : If He, to whom I have dedicated this body of mine, chooses to suffer through me, you also will have to be patient.

-FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Very well, then, Father! Let us also go, and then let happen what may!

DHANANJAY : You must wait here for me. This is a strange place and I must get to know something about the neighbourhood.

[He goes.]

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Have you noticed the features of these men of Uttarakut? They look as if the Creator, when He made them, had begun with a big lump of flesh and had had no time to finish His work.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: And do you see how they dress themselves in tight clothes.

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: They pack themselves up tightly in bundles as though to prevent the least leakage.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: They're born to drudgery. They spend their lives in going from market to market, and from one landing place to another.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: They've no culture worth speaking of. The books that they have are worth nothing.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Nothing at all. Haven't you noticed the letters in them like lines of white ants creeping across the page.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Well said! White ants indeed! Their culture gnaws everything to pieces.

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: And heaps up earth mounds. They kill life with their arms and destroy mind with their books.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Sin! Sin! Our guru says that even to cross their shadow is a sin. Do you know why?

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Tell me, why.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: After the nectar had been churned up by the Gods and Titans from the sea, some drops of it were spilt from the Gods' cups. From the clay thus formed the ancestor of the Shiu-tarai was made. And when the Titans licked the nearly empty cups of the Gods and threw them into the ditch, the broken pieces of the cups were fashioned into the ancestor of the Uttarakut people. That's why they are so hard, and faugh! - so unclean!

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Where did you learn all this?

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: From our own guru

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: [reverently bowing *his head].* Guru, you're truth itself.

[A group of UTTARAKUT CITIZENS enters.]

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Everything has passed off so happily, excepting the admission of that blacksmith,

Bibhuti into the Kshatriya order by our king.

SECOND UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: That's all a domestic question. We shall deal with that, later on. Meanwhile let's cry 'Long live the Royal Engineer, Bibhuti.'

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: He who has united the Kshatriya's weapons with the tools of the Vaishyal 'Long live Bibliuti.'

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Hallo! There are some men from Shiu-tarai.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: How d' you know?

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Don't you see their ear-cups. How queer they look! They seem like people suddenly thumped on the head and thus stopped in their growth.

SECOND UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Of all head dresses, why have they chosen this? Do they think that ears are a mistake of the Creator?

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: They have put an embankment over their ears, lest the precious little intelligence which they have should ooze out.

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: No, it's rather to prevent any common sense entering in to trouble them.

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN. Some ear-pulling ghost of Uttarakut might haunt them!

[They all laugh.]

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Hallo! You clodhoppers from Shiu-tarai! What's the matter with you?

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Don't you know that today's our festival? Come and join us in our cry-'Long live the Royal Engineer Bibhuti!'

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Are your throats dry? Shout 'Long live Bibhuti.'

GANESH : Why should we cry 'Long live Bibhuti'! What has he done?

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Just hark at him! 'What has he done?' The tremendous news has not reached them yet! That's all the result of their ear-caps!

[The UTTARAKUT CITIZENS laugh]

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Do you ask what he has done? Why! The water to quench your thirst is in his hands! If he withholds it, then you will dry up, like toads in a time of drought!

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Our water in Bibhuti's hands! Has he suddenly become a God?

SECOND UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: He has dismissed God from service. He'll take up God's work himself.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Is there any specimen of his work?

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: Yes! That embankment across Muktadhara.

[SHIU-TARAI CITIZENS *laugh loudly.]*

SECOND UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: D'you take this to be a joke?

GANESH : Why! What else can it be? That son of a blacksmith to snatch away from us the gift that comes from Bhairava Himself.

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: See with your own eyes there in the sky!

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Great heavens! What on earth is that?

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Good God! It looks like a gigantic grasshopper just going to jump towards the. stars!

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: That grasshopper is going to stop, with his legs, your water supply!

GANESH : Leave off that foolery, won't you? Some day you will be saying that the son of this blacksmith is riding the grasshopper in order to catch the moon!

FIRST UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: That's the beauty of their ear-caps. They refuse to listen and thus they perish!

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: We refuse to perish!

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN: That sounds well! But who is to save you?

GANESH : Haven't you seen our God, our Vairagi Dhananjay? One of his bodies is in the temple, and one outside.

THIRD UTTARAKUT CITIZEN : Listen to these men with their ear-caps on! Nobody can save them from utter destruction.

[The UTTARAKIJT CITIZENS go out.]

[Enters DHANANJAY.]

DHANANJAY : Fools! What have you been saying? Is it in my hand to save you from death?-Then you're dead thrice over!

GANESH : The Uttarakut people said to us that Bibhuti has stopped the water of Muktadhara.

DHANANJAY : Did they say that an embankment had been raised?

GANESH : Yes, Father!

DHANANJAY : You haven't listened to them carefully!

GANESH : It is not worth listening to!

DHANANJAY : Have you kept all your ears with me alone? Must I hear for all of you?

THIRD SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: What is there to hear at all, Father?

DHANANJAY : Is it a small thing, to control the turbulent

power, whether it is outside us or within us?

GANESH : That may be; but what about this stoppage of.

DHANANJAY : That's a different matter; and Bhairava will never suffer it to be done. I must go and find out all about it. This world is full of voices. To stop listening to them is to perish.

[DHANANJAY goes out.]

[Another CITIZEN *from Shiu-tarai enters.)*

FOURTH SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Bishan, what's the news?

BISHAN : The Crown Prince has been recalled from Shiu-tarai.

ALL : Impossible!

BISHAN : What are you to do?

ALL : We shall take him back.

BISHAN : How?

ALL : By force.

BISHAN : What about our King?

ALL : We defy him.

[Enter King RANAJIT and MINISTER]

RANAJIT : Whom do you defy?

ALL : [to the King]. Long live your Majesty!

GANESH : We have come to you with our prayer.

RANAJIT : What is it?

ALL : We want the Crown Prince for ourselves.

RANAJIT : You are modest in your demand.

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Yes, we must take him back to Shiu-tarai.

RANAJIT : And then triumphantly forget to pay the taxes?

ALL: But we're starving.

RANAJIT : Where is your leader?

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN [pointing *to* GANESH]. Here's our leader, Ganesh.

RANAJIT : No. Where is the Vairagi.

GANESH : There he comes.

[Enters DHANANJAY.]

RANAJIT : It is you who make these people forget themselves.

DHANANJAY : Yes, Sir. And I forget myself also.

RANAJIT : Don't parry words with me! Tell me, are you for paying taxes?

DHANANJAY : No, Sir! Decidedly no!

RANAJIT : You are insolent.

DHANANJAY : I must not give you what is not yours.

RANAJIT : Not mine?

DHANANJAY : A part of our excess food belongs to you, but not the food which belongs to our hunger.

RANAJIT : Do you prevent my people from paying me my dues?

DHANANJAY : Yes, they are timid and ready to submit. But I tell them. 'Give your life only to Him, whose gift it is.'

RANAJIT : Their timidity you merely repress with your own assurance; but when that bloated assurance is pricked somewhere, the fear will burst out with double force, and then they will be lost. You have trouble written on the tablet of your fate.

DHANANJAY : I have taken that tablet to my heart. There dwells He, who is above all trouble.

RANAJIT : [to SHIU TARAI CITIZENS] . All of you go back to your, place, and the Vairagi will remain here

ALL : No, that cannot be!

DHANANJAY : *[Sings].*

'Remain' you cry.
But, strain hard as you may,
Only that will remain which must.

King! You can keep nothing by straining. He who gives all, keeps all. That which your greed tries to keep, is a stolen thing. It will have to be given up.

[sings.]

You are wilful, you are strong, in the injuries you inflict,
There is one who suffers,

And only what he chooses to bear,

Shall be borne

You make a mistake. King, when you think that the world, which you take by force is your world. What you keep free, you gain. But seize it, and it eludes you!

[sings.]

You dream that you make the world dance,
to the tune of your own desire;
Suddenly your eyes open; you see,
That things happen which you never wish.

RANAJIT : Minister, keep this Vairagi under custody.

MINISTER: Sire.-[pauses.]

RANAJIT : This command of mine is not agreeable to you?

MINISTER : A terrible engine of punishment is made ready, You merely weaken it, by trying to add to its fierceness.

SHIU-TARAI CITIZENS : We shall never allow this.

DHANANJAY: Leave me, I tell you! Leave me and go!

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Haven't you heard, Father, that we have also lost our Crown Prince?

SECOND SHIU TARAI CITIZEN: Who is there to sustain our strength if we lose both of you?

DHANANJAY: I am defeated! Let me retire.

ALL: Why, Father?

DHANANJAY: You rejoice to think, that you gain me, and take no heed that you lose yourself! I cannot make good that loss! You put me to shame!

FIRST SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Don't say that! We shall do whatever you wish.

DHANANJAY: Then leave me and go.

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: But have you the hear to keep away from us? Do you not love us?

DHANANJAY: It is better to love you and keep you free, than to love you and smother you by my love. Go! No more of this! Go, and leave me!

SECOND SHIU-TARAI CITIZEN: Very well, Father, we go. But-

DHANANJAY: No 'but!' Hold your heads high and go!

ALL: Very well, father, we go!

[They move, slowly away.]

DHANANJAY: Is that what you call going? Quick! Begone!

GANESH: As you wish. But you must know, that all our hopes and thoughts remain with you.

[They go.]

RANAJIT : What are you thinking of, Vairagi? Why are you so silent?

DHANANJAY : They have made me anxious, King!

RANAJIT : For what?

DHANANJAY : I am, afraid that I have succeeded in doing what your own Chandapal has failed to accomplish with his baton.

RANAJIT: What makes you think so?

DHANANJAY: Once I chuckled to myself and said,- 'I am strengthening their hopes and thoughts.' But today they brutally threw it in my face, that it was I who had robbed them of their hopes and thoughts.

RANAJIT: How has that been made possible?

DHANANJAY: The more I excited them, the less I matured their minds. By making people run and rush, you do not lighten their load of debts.-They believe me to be greater even than their Providence, and to have the power to write off the debt, which they owe to their God. And therefore they shut their eyes and cling to me with all their might.

RANAJIT: They have taken you to be their God.

DHANANJAY: And thus they stop at me, and never reach their true God. He, who could have guided them from within, has been obscured by me, who forced them from outside.

RANAJIT: You prevent them, when they come to pay their dues to their king. But do not you suffer in your mind, when they come to pay you the offering which is for their God?

DHANANJAY: I do indeed! I feel as if I could sink through the ground. They become bankrupt in their minds by spending on me all their worship. The responsibility for their debt will be mine; and I shall not be able to escape from it.

RANAJIT: What is your duty now?

DHANANJAY: To remain away from them. if it is true that I have raised an embankment across the freedom of their minds, then I am afraid the God Bhairava will take both your Bibhuti and me to account at the same time.

RANAJIT: Then why delay? Why not move away?-[To UDDHAB] Take this Vairagi to my tent and keep him there.

[UDDHAB takes DHANANJAY to the tent.]

RANAJIT: Minister! Go and see Abhijit in the guard house. If you find him in a repentant mood, then-

MINISTER: Sire, is it not right, that you yourself should personally-

RANAJIT: No, no! He is a traitor against his own people. I shall not see his face, until he confesses his guilt I go back to my palace. Send me the news there!

[The King goes]

[Enter the DEVOTEES, who sing.]
Victory to the fearful Flame,
That tears the heart of Darkness
That burns to ashes things which are dead
Victory to Him, whose voice.thunders forth Truth
Whose right arm smites the unrighteous
Whose guidance leads mortals across Death

[They go.]

[UDDHAB re-enters.]

UDDHAB: What is this? The King goes away without seeing the Crown Prince!

MINISTER: He was afraid, lest his resolution should fail him. He was prolonging his talk with the Vairagi, because the conflict was going on in his mind. He could not decide to go into the tent or to leave the tent. I must go and see the Crown Prince.

[They go out.]

[Some CITIZENS from Uttarakut enter.]

FIRST CITIZEN : We must be firm; Let's go to the King.

SECOND CITIZEN: What's the good of it? The Crown Prince is the Jewel of his heart. We will never be able to judge him; he will only be angry with us.

FIRST CITIZEN: That doesn't matter. We must give him a piece of our mind, whatever may happen after. The Crown Prince made such a fine display of his love for us, and is this the end? Shiu-tarai has become greater in importance to him than Uttarakut.

SECOND CITIZEN: If this can come to pass, then there's no justice in the world!

THIRD CITIZEN: It's impossible to trust anybody merely by his appearance.

FIRST CITIZEN If our king doesn't punish him, we must do it ourselves.

SECOND CITIZEN: What will you do?

FIRST CITIZEN: He'll not find his place here. He must be sent off along the very path he has opened out at Nandi Pass.

THIRD CITIZEN: But that man at Chabua village says, that he's not at Shiu-tarai at this moment. And he cannot be found in the palace here.

FIRST CITIZEN: I am sure that our King has been hiding him from us.

THIRD CITIZEN: Hiding him? We'll break down the palace walls and drag him out!

FIRST CITIZEN: We'll set fire to the palace.

[Enter the MINISTER and UDDHAB.]

FIRST CITIZEN: [To the MINISTER]. Don't you try to play the game of hide and seek with us! Bring out the Crown Prince!

MINISTER: Who am I, to bring him out?

SECOND CITIZEN: It must have been by your advice.- But, I tell you - it won't do! We'll drag him out from his hiding place.

MINISTER: Then take the reins of this government in your own hands, and release him from the King's prison.

THIRD CITIZEN: From the King's prison!

MINISTER: The King has imprisoned him.

ALL: Long live the King! Victory to Uttarakut!

SECOND CITIZEN: Come, let's go to the prison, and there-

MINISTER: What?

SECOND CITIZEN : We'll take the flowers from the garland that Bibhuti has cast off, and put the string of it on the Crown Prince's neck.

MINISTER: The Crown Prince is guilty, you say, because he has broken the Fort. But is there no guilt in it, when you. break the laws of the realm?

SECOND CITIZEN: That's altogether a different affair.

THIRD CITIZEN : But if we do break the laws?

MINISTER: You may jump into the void because you are not in love with the ground underneath your feet. But I can assure you, that you won't find yourself in love with that void.

THIRD CITIZEN : Then let's go and' stand before the Palace and shout, 'Long live the King.'

FIRST CITIZEN: Look there! The sun has set, and the sky's growing dark. But that framework of Bibhuti's machine is still glowing. It looks as if it had got red with drunkenness.

SECOND CITIZEN: And on that trident, the last sinking light of the day is held aloft. It looks a kind of,-I don't know how to describe it.

[The CITIZENS of Uttarakut go out.]

MINISTER: Now I understand, why the King has kept the Crown Prince captive in his own camp.

UDDHAB: Why?

MINISTER: To save him from the hands of his people. But things look ugly. The excitement is growing wilder every moment.

[Enters SANJAY.)

SANJAY: I dare not show my eagerness to the King, because that only helps to make his determination stronger.

MINISTER: Prince, try to keep quiet. Do not add to the complications which are already too great.

SANJAY: I went to talk to the people. I knew that they loved the Crown Prince more than life itself; that they would not tolerate his imprisonment. But I found them flaming with anger at the news of the opening out of Nandi Pass.

MINISTER: Then you ought to understand, that the Crown Prince's safety lies in his imprisonment itself.

SANJAY: I have ever followed him, from my childhood. Let me follow him into the prison.

MINISTER: What good will that do?

SANJAY: Every man is but half a man by himself. He finds his unity only when he is truly united with someone else. My...unity I find in my union with the Crown Prince.

MINISTER: But where the union is true, a mere outward meeting is superfluous. The cloud in the sky, and the water in the sea, are truly one, in spite of their distance from each other. Our Crown Prince must manifest himself through you, where he is absent.

SANJAY: These words do not seem like your own. They sound like his.

MINISTER: His words are everywhere in the air of this place. We make use of them, and yet forget that they are his.

SANJAY: You have done well to remind me of this. I shall serve him by living away from him. I must now go to the King.

MINISTER: Why?

SANJAY: I shall ask the King to give me the Governorship of Shiu-tarai.

MINISTER: But the times are very critical.

SANJAY: And therefore, this is the best time.

[They go.]

[Enters VISHWAJIT, the King's uncle.]

VISHWAJIT: Who is there? Is that Uddhab?

UDDHAB: Yes, Sire!

VISHWAJIT : I was waiting for it to grow dark. Have you received my letter?

UDDHAB: I have.

VISHWAJIT: Have you followed my advice?

UDDHAB:You will know within a short time. But -

VISHWAJIT: Have no misgiving in your mind. The King is not ready to give him freedom: but if, by some chance, someone without his knowledge effects it, it will be a great relief to the King.

UDDHAB: But he will never forgive the man who does it.

VISHWAJIT: My soldiers will take you and your guards captive. The responsibility is mine.

[A voice from outside, 'Fire! Fire!']

UDDHAB: There it is! they have set on fire the kitchen tent, which is near the guard-room. This is the opportunity for me to release Dhananjay and the Crown Prince.

[He goes out, and ABHIJIT comes in later.]

ABHIJIT: [to VISHWAJIT]. Why are you here?

VISHWAJIT: I have come to capture you. You must come to Mohangarh.

ABHIJIT: Nothing will be able to keep me captive today, - neither anger, nor affection. You think that you are the agents who set this tent on fire? No! This fire has been waiting for me! The leisure has not been granted to me to remain in captivity.

VISHWAJIT: Why, child! What work have you to do?

ABHIJIT: I must pay off the debt of my birthright. The current of the waterfall has been my first nurse and I must set her free.

VISHWAJIT: There is time enough for that, but not today!

ABHIJIT : All that I know is this, that the time has come! no one knows when that time will ever come again.

VISHWAJIT : We also shall join you.

ABHIJIT : No, the quest is mine; it has never reached you.

VISHWAJIT :The people of Shiu-tarai, who love you and are eagerly waiting to join hands in your work; will you not call them to your side.

ABHIJIT : If my call had come to them also, they would never sit waiting for me. My call will only lead them astray.

VISHWAJIT :It is growing dark, my child.

ABHIJIT : The light comes from that direction, from whence comes the call.

VISHWAJIT : I have not the power to turn you from your own path. Though you are taking a plunge into the darkness, I will trust in God to guide you. I must leave you in His hands. Only let me hear one word of hope. Tell me, that we shall meet again.

ABHIJIT: Keep it ever in your mind, that we can never be separated.

[They go in opposite directions.]

[Enter BATU *and* DHANANJAY:]

BATU: Father, the day is ended and it grows dark.

DHANANJAY: My son, we have formed the habit of depending upon the light which is outside us, and therefore we are blinded when it is dark.

BATU: I had thought that the dance of the God, Bhairava, would commence from to-day. But has the Engineer, Bibhuti, bound up even His hands and feet with the machine?

DHANANJAY: When Bhairava begins His dance, it is not visible. Only when it comes to its end, is it revealed.

BATU: Give its confidence, Master. We are afraid! Awake Bhairava! Awake! The light has gone out! The path is dark! We find no response! Lord of all conquering Life! Kill our fear with something still more dread! Bhairava, awake! Awake!

[He goes.]

[Enter CITIZENS of Uttarakut.]

FIRST CITIZEN: It was a lie! He's not in the prison house! They have hidden him somewhere.

SECOND CITIZEN: We shall see how they can hide him.

DHANANJAY: No! They will never be able to hide him. The walls will break down; the gate will be shattered. The light will rush into the dark corner, and everything will be revealed.

FIRST CITIZEN: Who's this?-He gave me such a start.

THIRD CITIZEN: All's right! We must have some victim!

This Vairagi will serve us quite well. Bind him!

DHANANJAY: What is the use of catching one, who has always surrendered himself?

FIRST CITIZEN: Leave your saintliness behind you! We are not your followers.

DHANANJAY: You are fortunate! I know some miserable wretches, who have lost their teacher by following him.

FIRST CITIZEN: Who is their teacher?

DHANANJAY: Their true teacher is he, from whom they get-their blows.

[Enter the DEVOTEES, who sing.]

Victory to the fearful fame,
That tears the heart of Darkness,
That burns to ashes things which are dead,
Victory to Him, whose voice thunders forth Truth,
Whose.right arm smites the unrighteous,
Whose guidance leads mortals across death,
Victory to Him!

THIRD CITIZEN: Look there! Look at that! The evening is darkening and that machine is looking blacker and blacker.

FIRST CITIZEN: In the day time, it tried to outmatch the sunlight, and now it's rivalling the night itself in blackness. It looks like a ghost!

SECOND CITIZEN: I can't understand why Bibhuti built it in that fashion. Wherever we are in the town, we cannot help looking at it. It's like a shriek rending the sky:

[Enters FOURTH CITIZEN.]

FOURTH CITIZEN: Our King's uncle has carried away by force the Crown Prince along with the guards who guarded his prison.

FIRST CITIZEN: What's the meaning of that?

THIRD CITIZEN: It shows he has the blood of Uttarakut in his veins. He must have done it, for fear lest the Crown Prince should fail to get his proper punishment from our King.

FIRST CITIZEN: Outrageous! Think of it! To encroach upon our right to punish our own Prince ourselves!

SECOND CITIZEN: The best thing to do, friend, is to - you understand?

FIRST CITIZEN: Yes, Yes. The gold mine which he has in his territory,-

THIRD CITIZEN: And I've heard from a most reliable source that he has at least fifty thousand head of cattle in his stall. We must take possession of them, counting every head. This is insufferable!

FOURTH CITIZEN: And then again, the yearly yield of his saffron field must amount at least to-

SECOND CITIZEN: Yes! Yes! His state must be made to disgorge it.

What an affront!

FIRST CITIZEN: Come! Let us inform the King about it.

[They all go.]

[Enters a TRAVELLER, who shouts out.]

FIRST TRAVELLER: Budhan! Sambhu! Budha-an! Sambhu-u-u! What a nuisance! They sent me in advance, saying they'd overtake me, following the shortcut. But there's no sign of them.-[Looking up] That black iron monster over there! It's making grimaces at me! It makes me shiver with fear.-

[Enters another TRAVELLER]

Who's there? Why don't you answer? Are you Budhan?

SECOND TRAVELLER : I'm Nimku, the lamp-seller. They've got an all night festival in the Capital, and lamps will be needed.-Who are You?

FIRST TRAVELLER : I'm Hubba. I belong to a band of strolling players. Did you meet with our party on the way, and their leader Andu?

NIMKU : There are crowds of men coming up. How could I recognize them?

HUBBA : But our Andu is an entire man by himself. You don't have to put on glasses to pick him out of the crowd. He's not a mere fraction.-I say! What a quantity of lamps you have in your basket! Can't you spare one for me? Those who are out in the street have greater need of lamps than those who are in their houses.

NIMKU : How much will you pay for it?

HUBBA : If I could afford to *pay,* I should order you in a loud voice, and not waste my sweet tones on you!

NIMKU : You seem to be a humorist!

[He goes]

HUBBA :I failed to get my lamp; but I got my recognition as a humorist! That's something! Humorists have the knack of making themselves felt, even in the dark. Confound this chirping of the crickets! It is like pins'and needles in the limbs of the sky, made audible.-I wish I had used my muscle with that lamp-seller, instead of displaying my humour.

[Enters a RECRUITER.]

RECRUITER: Up! Up!

HUBBA : Oh, goodness! Why on earth d'you go and frighten me in that way?

RECRUITER : Get ready to start!

HUBBA : That was exactly my intention, my friend. And now I am trying to digest the lesson how to get stuck, when one tries to go ahead.

RECRUITER: Your party is ready. Only you are wanting.

HUBBA : What do you say? We, inhabitants of Tin Moh<na are remarkably inept at understanding words, when their meaning is not clear. What do you mean by *my* party?

RECRUITER : We inhabitants of Chabua village have become wonderful adepts in making our meaning clear by other means than words. [Gives him a push.] Now you understand!

HUBBA : H'm! Yes! The simple meaning is, I must start, whether I wish it or not. But for what place? Please make your answer a little more gentle this time. That first push of your talk has cleared my mind greatly.

RECRUITER :You have to go to Shiu-tarai.

HUBBA : To Shiu-tarai? On this dark night? What is the subject of the play there?

RECRUITER : The subject is 'The rebuilding of the fort of Nandi Pass.'

HUBBA :You mean to rebuild the Fort with my help? My dear friend, it's only because you can't get a good sight of me, in this darkness, that you could ever utter such an absurdity as that! I'm -

RECRUITER: I don't care who you are! You've got your two hands.

HUBBA :That's only because I could not. help it. But can you call these -

RECRUITER: The proof of the use of your hands doesn't come from your mouth. We shall discover it at the right time. Come now! Get up!

[Enters SECOND RECRUITER.]

SECOND RECRUITER: Here's another man, Kankar.

KANKAR : Who is he?

WAYFARER : I'm nobody, Sir! I am Lachman. I sound the gong in the Temple of Bhairava.

KANKAR : That means your hands are strong. Come to Shiu-tarai!

LACHMAN : But the gong?

KANKAR: Bhairava will sound His own gong himself.

LACHMAN : Pray, have pity on me! My wife's ailing!

KANKAR : She'll either be cured or dead, when you're absent. And the same thing'll happen if you're present.

HUBBA : Lachman, my good fellow! Don't make a fuss. The work has its risk, I know: But your objection also has its own risk, and I've had some taste of it already.

KANKAR : Listen! I can hear the voice of Narsingh.

[NARSINGH enters with a gang of men.]

KANKAR: Is the news good, Narsingh?

NARSINGH : I've gathered these men for our purpose. And some have already been despatched.

ONE OF THE PARTY: I refuse to go.

KANKAR: Why? What's the matter with you?

ONE OF THE PARTY: Nothing. But I'm not going.

KANKAR : What's his name, Narsingh?

NARSINGH : His name's Banwari. He makes rosaries out of lotus seeds.

KANKAR: Let me settle with him. [To BANWARI] Why do you refuse to go?

BANWARI : I've no quarrel with the Shiu-tarai people. They're not our enemies.

KANKAR: But let's suppose that we are their enemies! Hasn't that also its responsibility?

BANWARI : I'd hate to take part in wrong-doing.

KANKAR : Wrong's only wrong where you've the right to judge. Uttarakut is a great body, you're only a part. Whatever you do as a part of it-you can have no responsibility for that!

BANWARI : There's a greater body, whose parts are Uttarakut as well as Shiu-tarai.

KANKAR: I say, Narsingh! This man argues! Nobody's a greater nuisance for the country than the man who argues!

NARSINGH : Hard work is the best cure for that! This is why I'm taking him along with us.

BANWARI : I'll be only a burden to you and of no use for your work.

KANKAR: You're a burden to Uttarakut, and we're trying to get rid of you.

HUBBA : My dear friend Banwari, you seem to belong to that class of men who are rational and you won't accept the fact that there's another class of men who are powerful. And you two always clash! Either learn their method, or else give up your own and keep quiet.

BANWARI: What's your method?

HUBBA :I usually sing. But that would only be useless now, and therefore I keep silence.

KANKAR : [to BANWARI]. Now tell me what you're going to do.

BANWARI : I shan't move a step further.

KANKAR : Oh! Then we'll have to make you move. I say, there! Bind him with this rope.

HUBBA *: [intervening].* My dear sir, please let me say one word. Don't be angry with me! The force you spend in carrying this man can be better used, if you save it.

KANKAR: Those who are unwilling to serve Uttarakut- we've got our unpleasant duty towards them, and we can't neglect it. D'you understand?

HUBBA : H'm, yes! Very clearly indeed!

[They all go out except NARSINGH and KANKAR.]

NARSINGH : Here comes Bibhuti. Long live Bibhuti!

[Enters BIBHUTI.]

KANKAR: We've made great progress. Our party's grown strong. Why are you here? They're waiting for you at their Festival.

BIBHUTI : I have no heart for this Festival.

NARSINGH: Why?

BIBHUTI : The news about the Nandi pass has deliberately been sent to us to-day, in order to take away from the glory of my reception. There is a rivalry against me.

KANKAR: Who's the rival?

BIBHUTI: I do not want to utter his name. You all know it The problem has become acute with him,- whether he shall have more honour in this country than I. I have not told you one fact. A messenger came to me from the other party, to lure me away, and he also gave me a hint that they are ready to break the embankment.

NARSINGH : What impudence!

KANKAR : How could you bear it, Bibhuti?

BIBHUTI : It is useless to contradict the ravings of madness.

KANKAR: But is it right to feel too secure? I remember how you said once that there are one or two weak spots, which can easily be -

BIBHUTI : Those who have any information about these weak spots also know, that they themselves will be carried away by the flood, if they meddle with them.

NARSINGH : Wouldn't it be wise to keep guards at those places?

BIBHUTI : Death itself is keeping guard there. There is not the least fear for my embankment. If only I can shut up once again the Nandi Pass, I shall die happy.

KANKAR : It's not at all difficult for you to do that.

BIBHUTI : My appliances are ready. Only the Pass is so narrow, that it can be defended by a very few men.

KANKAR : That means we shall require men who must die.

[From behind the scene, the cry comes, 'Awake, Bhairava! A wake!']

[Enters DHANANJAY.]

KANKAR : This is an evil sight for us at the moment of starting for our adventure.

BIBHUTI : Vairagi, saints like you have never succeeded in awakening Bhairava. But men like myself, whom you call infidels, are on our way to give Him a good rousing up.

DHANANJAY : I have no doubt in my mind, that it's for you to awaken Him.

BIBHUTI : Our process of awakening Him is not through sounding temple gongs and lighting temple lamps.

DHANANJAY : No! When you bind Him with your fetters, he will wake up to break them.

BIBHUTI : Our fetters are not easy to break. The evils are innumerable, and there are an infinite number of knots.

DHANANJAY : His time comes when the obstacle becomes insurmountable.

[Tire DEVOTEES come, singing.]

Victory to Him, the Terrible,
The Lord of Destruction,
The Uttermost Peace,
The Dissolver of doubts,
The Breaker of fetters,
Who carries us beyond all conflicts,
The Terrible! The Terrible!

[Enter RANAJIT and MINISTER.]

MINISTER : Sire, the camp is deserted and a great part of it is burnt away. The few guards, who were there.-

RANAJIT : Never mind about them. Where is Abhijit? I must know!

KANKAR: King! We claim punishment for the Crown Prince.

RANAJIT : Do I ever wait for your claim, in order to punish the one who deserves it?

KANKAR : The people harbour suspicions in their minds, when they cannot find him.

RANAJIT : Suspicions? Against whom?

KANKAR: Pardon me, Sire! You must understand the state of mind of your subjects. Owing to the delay in finding the Crown Prince, their impatience has grown to such a degree, that they will never wait for your judgment, when he is discovered.

BIBHUTI : Of our own accord we have taken in hand the duty of building up again the Fort of Nandi Pass.

RANAJIT : Why could you not leave it in my hands?

BIBHUTI : We have the right to suspect your secret sanction to this outrage done by the Crown Prince.

MINISTER : Sire, the mind of the public is excited by their selfglorification on the one hand and by their anger on the other. Do not add to their impatience and make it still more turbulent by your impatience.

RANAJIT : Who is there? Is it Dhananjay?

DHANANJAY : I am happy to find that you have not forgotten me!

RANAJIT : You certainly know where Abhijit is.

DHANANJAY : I can never keep secret what I know for certain.

RANAJIT : Then what are you doing here?

DHANANJAY : I am waiting for the appearance of the Crown Prince.

[From outside, the voice is heard of AMBA.]

AMBA : Suman! Suman, my darling! It's dark. It's so dark!

RANAJIT : Who is that calling?

MINISTER : It is that mad woman, Amba.

[Enters AMBA]

AMBA : He has not yet come back.

RANAJIT : Why do you seek him? The time came, and Bhairava called him away.

AMBA : Does Bhairava only call away and never restore, secretly? In the depth of the night? - My Suman!

[AMBA goes out.]

[Enters a MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER : A multitude-of men from Shiu-tarai is marching up.

BIBHUTI : How is that? We had planned to disarm them, by falling on them suddenly. There must be some traitor among us! Kankar! Very few people knew, except your party: Then how was it,-?

KANKAR: Bibhuti! You suspect even us!

BIBHUTI : Suspicion knows no limits,

KANKAR : Then we also suspect you.

BIBHUTI : You have the right! But when the time comes, there will be a reckoning.

RANAJIT [to the MESSENGER]: Do you know, why they are coming?

MESSENGER : They have heard that the Crown Prince is in prison, and they have come to seek him out and rescue him.

BIBHUTI : We are also seeking him, as well as they. Let us see who can find him!

DHANANJAY : Both of you will find him. He has no favourites.

MESSENGER : There comes Ganesh, the leader of Shiu-tarai.

[Enters GANESH.]

GANESH [to DHANANJAY]: Father, shall we find him?

DHANANJAY : Yes.

GANESH : Promise us!

DHANANJAY : Yes, you shall find him,.

RANAJIT : Whom are you seeking?

GANESH : King! You must release him.

RANAJIT : Whom?

GANESH : Our Crown Prince, You do not want him, but we do Would you shut up everything that we need for our life,- even him?

DHANANJAY : Fool! Who has the power to shut *him up?*

GANESH : We shall make him our King.

DHANANJAY : Yes, you shall! He is coming with his King's crown.

[Enter the DEVOTEES, singing.]

Victory to the fearful Flame,
That tears the heart of Darkness,
That burns to ashes things which are dead.
Victory to Him whose voice thunders forth Truth.
Whose right arm smites the unrighteous.
Whose guidance leads mortals across Death.

[From outside is heard the cry of AMBA.)

AMBA : Mother calls, Suman! Mother calls! Come back, Suman! come back!

[A sound is heard in the distance./

BIBHBUTI : Hark! What is that? What is that sound?

DHANANJAY : It is laughter, bubbling up from the heart of the darkness.

BIBHUTI : Hush! Let me find out from what direction the sound comes.

[In the distance, the cry is faintly heard,
'Victory to *Bhairava!']*

BIBHUTI : [listening with his head bent towards the ground]. It is the sound of water.

DHANANJAY : The first beat of the drum before the dance-

BIBHUTI : The sound grows in strength!

KANKAR : It seems –

NARSINGH : Yes! It certainly seems-

BIBHUTI : My God! There is no doubt of it. The water of Muktadhara is freed! - Who has done it?-Who has broken the embankment? He shall pay the price! There is no escape for him!

[He rushes out.]

[KANKAR and NARSINGH rush out, following him.]

RANAJIT : Minister! What is this!

DHANANJAY : It is the call to the Feast of the Breaking of Bondage

[Sings.]

The drum beats;
It beats into the heatings of my heart.

MINISTER: Sire, it is –

RANAJIT : Yes, it must be his!

MINISTER : It can be no other man than –

RANAJIT : Who is so brave as he?

DHANANJAY : [sings].

His feet dance,

They dance in the depth of my life.

RANAJIT : I shall punish him, if punished he must be. But these people, maddened with rage, - Only Abhijit! He is favoured of the Gods! May the Gods save him!

GANESH : I do not understand what has happened, Master!

DHANANJAY : [sings]

The night watches,
And watches also the Watchman.
The silent stars throb with dread.

RANAJIT : I hear some steps! - Abhijit! Abhijit!

MINISTER: It must be he, who comes.

DHANANJAY : [sings].

My heartaches and aches,
While the fetters fall to pieces.

[Enters SANJAY.]

RANAJIT : Here comes Sanjay! - Where is Abhijit[7]

SANJAY : The waterfall of Muktadhara has borne him away, and we have lost him.

RANAJIT : What say you, Prince?

SANJAY : He has broken the embankment.

RANAJIT : I understand! And with this he has found his freedom! Sanjay! Did he take you with him?

SANJAY : No! But I was certain he would go there. And so I preceded him, and waited in the dark.-But there it ends. He kept me back. He 'would not let me go.

RANAJIT : Tell me more!

SANJAY : Somehow he had come to know about a weakness in the structure, and at that point he gave his blow to the monster Machine. The monster returned that blow against him. Then Muktadhara, like a mother, took up his stricken body into her arms and carried him away.

GANESH : We came to seek our Prince! Shall we never find him again!

DHANANJAY : You have found him for ever!

[Enter the DEVOTEES of Bhairava, singing.]

Victory to Him, who is Terrible,
The Lord of Destruction,
The Uttermost Peace.'
The Dissolver of doubts,
The Breaker of fetters,
Who carries us beyond all conflicts,
The Terrible.' the Terrible!
Victory to the fearful Flame,
That tears the hear of Darkness.!
That Turns to ashes things that are dead!
Victory to Him, whose voice thunders forth Truth.
Whose right arm smites the unrighteous,
Whose guidance leads mortals across death!
The Terrible! the Terrible!

7

Broken Ties

7

Broken Ties

The Uncle

1

WHEN I first met Satish he appeared to me like a costellation of stars, his eyes shining, his tapering fingers like flames of fire, his face glowing with a youthful radiance. I was surprised to find that most of his fellow students hated him for no other fault than that he resembled himself more than he resembled others. With men, as with insects, taking the colours of the surroundings is often the best means of self-protection.

The students in the hostel, where I lived, could easily guess my reverence for Satish. This caused them discomfort and they never missed an opportunity of reviling him in my hearing. If you have a speck of dust in your eye, it is best not to rub it., And when words smart, it is best to leave them unanswered.

But, one day, the calumny against Satish was so gross that I could not remain silent.

Yet the trouble was that I hardly knew anything about Satish; we seldom even had a word between us; while some of the other students were his close neighbours, and some his distant relatives. These affirmed, with assurance, that what they said was true; and I asserted, with even greater assurance, that it was incredible. Whereupon all my fellow inmates of the hostel bared their arms, and cried: "What impertinence"

That night I was vexed to tears. Next day, in an interval between lectures, when Satish was reading a book, lying at full length on the grass in College Square, I went up to him and, without a word of introduction, blurted out my agitation in a confused manner, scarcely knowing what I said.

Satish shut his book and locked in my face. Those who have not seen his eyes will not know what that look was like. He said to me: "Those who libel me do so, not because they love to know the truth, but because they love to believe evil of me. Therefore it is useless to try to prove to them that the calumny is untrue."

"But" I protested, "must not the liars be."

"They are not liars," interrupted Satish.

"I had a poor young neighbour," he went on, "who had epileptic fits.

Last winter I gave him a blanket. My servant came to me, in a furious temper, and told me that the boy only feigned the disease. These students who malign me are like that servant of mine. They believe what they say. Possibly my fate has awarded me an extra blanket which they think would have suited them better."

I ventured on the question: "Is it true what they say, that you are an atheist?"

He said: "Yes."'

I had to hang my head. What about my vehement assertion that Satish could not possibly be an atheist?

I had received two severe blows at the outset of my short acquaintance with Satish. I, had imagined that he was a Brahman, but came to know that Satish belonged to a Bania family, and I in whose veins flowed a bluer blood was bound duly to despise all Banias. Secondly, I had a rooted belief that atheists were worse than murderers, nay, worse even than beef-eaters.

Nobody could have imagined, even in a dream, that I would ever sit down and take my meals with a Bania student, or that my fanatical zeal in the creed of atheism would surpass even that of my instructor. Yet both these things came to pass.

Wilkins was our Professor in the College. His learning was as high as his opinion of his pupils was low. He felt that it was a menial occupation to teach literature to Bengali students. That is why, even in our Shakespeare class, he would give us the synonym for 'cat' as 'a quadruped of the feline species.' But Satish was excused from taking down these notes. The Professor told him: "I will make good to you the hours wasted in this class, when you come to my room."

The other less favoured students used to ascribe this partiality for Satish to his fair complexion and to his profession of atheism. Some of the more worldly-wise among them went to Wilkins' study, with a great show of enthusiasm, to borrow from him some book on Positivism. But he refused, saying that it would be beyond their understanding. That they should be held unfit even to cultivate atheism made their minds all the more bitter against Satish.

2

Jagamohan was Satish's uncle. He was a notorious atheist of that time. It would be inadequate to say that he did not believe in God,- rather he vehemently believed in 'No-God.' As the business of a Captain in the navy is more to sink ships than to steer clear, so it was Jagamohan's business to sink the creed of theism, wherever it put its head above water.

The order of his arguments ran like this:

If there be a God, then we must owe our intelligence to him.

But our intelligence clearly tells us that there is no God.

Therefore God himself tells us that there is no God.

"Yet you Hindus," he would conclude, "have the effrontery to contradict God by asserting that he exists. For this sin, three and thirty million gods and goddesses rightly serve you people, by twisting your ears for your presumption."

Jagamohan was married when he was a mere boy. Before his wife died he had read Malthus. He never married again.

His younger brother, Harimohan, was the father of Satish. Harimohan's nature was so exactly the opposite of his elder brother's, that people might suspect me of fabricating it for the purpose of writing this story. But only stories have to be always on their guard to sustain their reader's confidence. Facts have no such responsibility and laugh at incredulity. So, in this world, instances of two brothers, as exactly the opposite of one another as morning and evening, are by no means lacking.

Harimohan, in his infancy, had been a weakly child. His parents had tried to keep him safe from the attacks of all maladies by barricading him behind amulets and charms, dust taken from holy shrines, and blessings bought from innumerable Brahmans at enormous expense. When Harimohan grew up, he was physically robust enough, yet the tradition of his poor health lingered on in the family. So nobody claimed from him anything more arduous than that he should continue to live; and right dutifully did he fulfil all expectations by holding on to his life. At the same time, he never ceased to display the label that life in his case was more fragile than in most other mortals, and thus managed to divert towards himself the undivided attention of all his aunts and his mother. He had specially prepared meals served to him, and had less work, and more rest, than other members of the family. He was not allowed to forget for a moment that he was under the special protection, not only of his aforesaid mother and aunts, but also of the countless gods and goddesses presiding in the three regions of earth, sky and heaven. He thus acquired an attitude of prayerful dependence towards all the powers of the world, both seen and unseen: from police sub-inspectors, wealthy neighbours, and highly placed officials, to sacred cows and Brahmans.

Jagamohan's anxieties went altogether in the opposite direction. He would give a wide berth to men of power, lest the slightest suspicion of snobbishness should come near him. It was this same sentiment which had greatly to do with his defiance of the gods. His knees were too stiff to bend before those from whom favour could be expected.

Harimohan got himself married at the proper times, that is to say, long before the time. After three sisters and three brothers, Satish was born. Everybody was struck by his resemblance to his uncle, and Jagamohan took possession of him as if he were his own son.

At first, Harimohan was glad of this, having regard to the educational advantage of the arrangement; for Jagamohan had the reputation of being the most eminent scholar of that period. He seemed to live within the shell of his English books. It was easy to find the rooms he occupied in the house, by the rows of books about the walls; just as it is easy to know the bed of a stream by its lines of pebbles.

Harimohan petted and spoilt his eldest son, Purandar, to his heart's content. He had an impression that Purandar was too delicate to survive the shock of being denied anything he wanted. His education was neglected. No time was lost in getting him married; but that did not help to keep him within the connubial limits. Harimohan's daughter-in-law did not fail to express her emphatic disapprobation of her husband's excursions out of bounds, but Harimohan would only get angry with her and ascribe his son's conduct to her want of tact and charm.

Jagamohan took entire charge of Satish to save him from similar paternal solicitude. Satish acquired a mastery of the English language while he was still a child, and the inflammatory doctrines of Mill and Bentham set his brain on fire, till he began to burn like a living torch of atheism.

Jagamohan treated Satish, not as a ward, but as his boon companion. He held the opinion that veneration in human nature was a superstition, specially designed to make men into slaves. Some son-in-law of the family happened to write him a letter, with the usual formal beginning:

To the gracious feet of-'

Jagamohan, in answer, proceeded to instruct him in this wise:

My dear Naren,

Neither you, nor I, know what special significance it gives to the feet to call them 'gracious'. Therefore the epithet is worse than useless and had better be dropped. And then it is apt to give your correspondent a nervous shock when you address your letter only to his feet, completely ignoring their owner. Please do understand that, so long as my feet are attached to my body, you should never dissociate them from their context. Next, you should bear in mind that human feet have not the advantage of prehensility, and it is sheer madness to offer anything to them, confounding their natural function. Lastly, your use of the word 'feet' in the honorific plural instead of the dual inflection, may denote special reverence on your part (because there are animals with four feet which have your particular veneration) but I consider it my duty to disabuse your mind of all errors concerning my own zoological identity.

Yours,

Jagamohan

Jagamohan used to discuss with Satish subjects which are usually kept out of sight in polite conversation. If people objected to this plainness of speech with one so young, he would say that, just as you can only drive away hornets by breaking up their nest, so you can only get rid of the shamefulness of certain subjects by breaking through the shame itself.

When Satish had completed his college course, Harimohan tried his best to extricate him from his uncle's influence. But when once the noose is round the neck, it only grows tighter by pulling at it. Harimohan became more and more annoyed with his brother, the more Satish proved recalcitrant. If this atheism of his son and elder brother had been merely a matter of private opinion, Harimohan could have tolerated it. He was quite ready to pass off dishes of fowl as *.kid curry.* But matters had now become so desperate, that even lies were powerless to whitewash the culprits. What brought things to a head was this.

The positive side of Jagamohan's atheistic creed consisted in doing good to others. He felt a special pride in it, because doing good, for an atheist, was a matter of unmitigated loss. It had no allurements of merit, and no deterrents of punishment, in the hereafter. If he was asked, what concern he had in bringing about 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' he used to answer that his best incentive was, that he could expect nothing in return. He would say to Satish: *"Baba,* we are atheist, 'so the very pride of it should keep us stainless. Because we have no respect for any being higher than ourselves, we must all the more respect ourselves."

There were some leather shops in the neighbourhood kept by Mussalman dealers. The uncle and nephew bestirred themselves with great zeal and at considerable expense in doing good to these untouchable leather-dealers. This made Harimohan beside himself with indignation. Since he knew that any appeal to scriptures, or to tradition, would have no effect upon these two renegades, he complained to his brother concerning such wasting of their patrimony.

"When my expenditure," his brother answered, "comes up to the amount you have spent upon your full-fed Brahman priests, we shall be quits."

One day, Harimohan's people were surprised to find preparations going on in Jagamohan's quarters for a grand feast. The cooks and waiters were all Mussalmans. Harimohan called for his son and taxed him angrily: "I hear that you are going to give a feast to your respected friends, the leather-dealers."

Satish replied that he was far too poor to think of such a thing. It was his uncle who had invited them.

Satish's elder brother, Purandar, was equally indignant. He threatened to drive all these unclean guests away.

When Harimohan expressed his protest to his brother the latter answered: "I never make any objection to your offering food to your idols. You should make none to my offering food to my gods."

"Your gods!" exclaimed Harimohan.

"Yes, my gods," his brother repeated.

"Have you turned *Theist* all of a sudden?" sneered Harimohan.

"No!" retorted his brother. *"Theists* worship a God who is invisible. You idolators worship gods who are visible, but dumb and deaf. The gods I worship are both visible and audible, and it is impossible not to believe in them."

"Do you mean to say," cried Harimohan, "that these Mussalman leather-dealers are really your gods?"

"Yes, indeed," said Jagamohan. "You shall see their miraculous power when I put food before them. They will actually swallow it, which I defy your gods to do. It delights my heart to see my gods perform such divine wonders. If you have not become morally blind, it will delight your heart also."

Purandar came to his uncle and swore in a high-pitched voice that he was prepared to take desperate measures to put a stop to the proceedings.

Jagamohan laughed at him: "You monkey! Just you try to lay hands on my gods, and you will instantly discover how powerful they are. I shall not have to trouble to defend them."

Purandar was even a greater coward than his father. He played the tyrant only where he felt sure of receiving submission. In this case he could not screw up courage enough to risk a quarrel with his Mussalman neighbours. So he went over to Satish instead, and reviled him. Satish gazed at him with those wonderful eyes of his, and remained silent.

The feast was a great success.

3

Harimohan could not take this insult passively. He declared war. The property on whose income the whole family subsisted was a temple endowment. Harimohan brought a suit in the law court against his brother, accusing him of grave breaches of orthodox propriety which made him unworthy of continuing as a beneficiary of a Hindu religious endowment. Harimohan had as many witnesses as ever he wished. The whole Hindu neighbourhood was ready to support him.

Jagamohan professed in open court, that he had no faith in gods or idols of any description whatever: that all eatable food was for him food to be eaten: that he never bothered his head to find out the particular limb of Brahma from which the Mussalmans had issued, and so had not the smallest hesitation in taking food in their company.

The Judge decreed Jagamohan to be unfit to take any benefit from this temple property. Jagamohan's lawyers assured him that this decision could be upset by an appeal to the higher court. But Jagamohan refused to appeal. He said he would rather not cheat even the gods whom he did not believe in. Only those, who had the intelligence to believe such things, could have the conscience to betray them.

His friends asked him: "How are you going to maintain yourself?"

He answered: "If I have nothing else left to swallow, I

shall be content to gulp down my last breaths."

After this; a partition was made of the family house. A wall was raised from the ground floor to the uppermost story, dividing the house into two parts.

Harimohan had great faith in the selfish sanity of prudence in human nature. He was certain that the savour of good living would tempt Satish into his golden trap, away from the empty nest of Jagamohan. But Satish gave another proof that he had inherited neither his father's conscience, nor his sanity. He remained with his uncle.

Jagamohan had become so accustomed to look upon Satish as his own, that he took it as a matter of course when he found him remaining on his side after the partition.

But Harimohan knew his brother's temperament very well. He went about explaining to people that the reason why Jagamohan did not let go his hold on Satish was in order to make a good thing out of his brother by keeping his son as a kind of hostage. Harimohan almost shed tears as he complained to his neighbours: "Could my brother ever imagine that I was going to let him starve, that he should go to the length of concocting this diabolical plot against me? However, I shall now wait and see whether he is cleverer than I am."

Harimohan's insinuations, helped on by mutual friends, duly reached his brother's ears. Jagamohan was surprised at his own stupidity in not anticipating such a move on his brother's part.

He said: "Good-bye, Satish."

Satish was absolutely certain that nothing could make Jagamohan change his mind, so he had to take his leave, after having spent his eighteen years of life in his uncle's company.

When Satish had put his books and things on the top of the carriage and driven away, Jagamohan shut the door of his room and flung himself on the floor. When evening came, and the old servant knocked at the door with the lighted lamp, he got no answer.

Alas for the greatest happiness of the greatest number! The estimate in number is not all that counts in human affairs. The man who gains 'one' may go beyond all arithmetic, when the heart does the sum. When Satish took his departure, he at once became infinite to Jagamohan.

Satish went into a student's lodging to share a room with one of his friends. Harimohan shed tears while meditating on the neglect of filial duties in this godforsaken age. Harimohan had a very tender heart.

After the partition, Purandar dedicated a room in their portion of the house to the family god. It gave him a peculiar pleasure to know that his uncle must be execrating him for the noise raised every morning and evening by the sacred conches and prayer gongs.

In order to maintain himself, Satish secured a post as a private tutor. Jagamohan obtained an appointment as headmaster of a high school. And it became a religious duty with Harimohan and Purandar to persuade parents and guardians to take away their boys from the malign influence of the atheist, Jagamohan.

4

One day, after a long interval of absence, Satish came to Jagamohan. These two had given up the usual form of greething which passes between younger and elder. Jagamohan embraced Satish and led him to a chair and asked him for the news.

There was news indeed!

A girl named Nanibala had taken shelter with her widowed mother in the house of the mother's brother. So long as her mother lived, there was no trouble. But a short time ago her mother had died. Her cousins were rascals. One of their friends had taken away this girl. Then after a while, suspecting her of infidelity, he made her life a constant torture. This had happened in the house next to the one where Satish had his tutorship. Satish wanted to save her from this misery, but he had no money or shelter of his own. Therefore he had come to his uncle. The girl was about to give birth to a child.

Jagamohan, when he heard the story, was filled with indignation. He was not the man to calculate coldly the consequence of his deeds, and he at once said to his nephew: "I have the room in which I keep my books. I can put the girl there."

"But what about your books?" Satish asked in surprise.

Very few books, however, were now remaining. During the time while he had been unable to secure an appointment, he had been obliged to eke out a living by selling his books.

Jagamohan said: "Bring the girl here at once."

"She is waiting downstairs, I have brought her here."

Jagamohan ran downstairs, and found the girl crouching in a corner, wrapped in her sari, looking like a bundle of clothes.

Jagamohan greeted her at once in his deep bass voice: "Come, little mother, why do you sit in the dust?"

The girl covered her face and burst into tears. Jagamohan was not a man to give way to emotion, but his eyes were wet as he turned to Satish, and said: "The burden that this girl is bearing is ours."

Then he continued to the girl: "Mother, don't be shy with me. My school-fellows used to call me 'Mad Jagai', and I am the same madcap even now."

Without the least hesitation, he took the girl by both her hands and raised her. The veil dropped from off her head. Her face was fresh and infantile in its youthfulness; there was no line of hardness or vice in it. The inner purity of her heart had not been stained, just as a speck of dust does not soil a

flower.

Jagamohan took Nanibala to his upper room, and addressed her thus: "Mother, look what a state my room is in! The floor is all unswept. Everything is upside down; and as for myself, I have no fixed hour for my bath or my meals. Now that you have come to my house, everything will be put right; and even this mad Jagai will be made respectable."

Nanibala had never felt before, even when her mother lived, how much one person could be to another; because her mother had looked upon her, not so much as a daughter, but as a young girl who had to be watched.

Jagamohan employed an elderly woman servant to help Nanibala. At first Nani was afraid, lest Jagamohan should refuse to take food from her hand, because of her impurity. But as it turned out he refused to take his meals unless they were cooked and served by his little mother.

Jagamohan was aware that a great wave of calumny was about to break over his head. Nani also felt that it was inevitable, and she had no peace of mind. Within a day or two it began.

The servant who waited on her had at first supposed that Nani was Jagamohan's daughter. But she came one day and said hard things to Nani, and resigned her service in contempt. Nani became pale with fear, thinking of Jagamohan.

Jagamohan said to her: "My *little mother*, the full moon is up in the horizon of my life, so the time is ripe for the flood tide of revilement. But, however muddy the water may become, it will never stain my moonlight."

An aunt of Jagamohan's came from Harimohan's quarters muttering: "Jagai, what a disgrace, what a disgrace! Wipe off this stain of sin from your house."

Jagamohan answered: "You are pious people, and this feeling is worthy of you. But, if I drive away all relics of sin, what will become of this sinner?"

Some old woman of a grandmother came to him with the advice: "Send the wench away to the hospital. Harimohan is ready to bear all the cost."

"But she is my mother," replied Jagamohan. "Because someone else is ready to pay the expenses, should I send my mother to the hospital?"

The grandmother opened her eyes wide. "Who is this you call your mother?" she asked, in surprise.

Jagamohan replied: "One who nourishes life within her womb and is risking her own life to give birth to a child. I cannot call the other scoundrel-parent of the child 'Father'. He can only cause trouble, keeping himself safely out of it."

Harimohan's whole body shrank at the utter infamy of the thing. That a fallen woman should be sheltered only on the other side of the wall, and in the midst of a household sacred to the memory of generations of mothers and grandmothers! The disgrace was intolerable.

Harimohan at once surmised that Satish was mixed up in this affair, and that his uncle was encouraging him in his shameful conduct. He was so sure of his facts that he went about spreading the news. Jagamohan did not say a single word to contradict him.

"For us, atheists," he said, "the only heaven waiting for good deeds is calumny."

The more the rumour of Jagamohan's doings became distorted, the more he seemed to enjoy it, and his laughter rang loud in the sky. It was hardly possible for Harimohan, and respectable people of his class, to imagine that the uncle could go so far as to jest openly on such a subject and indulge in loud unseemly buffoonery about it with his own nephew.

Though Purandar so long had been carefully avoiding his uncle's part of the house, he vowed that he would never rest now till he had driven the girl away from her shelter.

At the time when Jagamohan had to go to his school, he would shut up all access to his quarters, and he would come back the moment he had any leisure, to see how Nani was faring.

One day, at noon, Purandar, with the help of a bamboo ladder crossed the boundary parapet over the terrace roof and jumped down on Jagamohan's side of the house. Nanibala was resting after the mid-day meal. The door of her room was open. When Purandar, coming down from the terrace, caught sight of her sleeping figure he gave a great start and shouted: "Ah, I see, so you are here, are you?"

Nani woke up and saw Purandar before her. She went pale as death and her limbs stiffened, leaving her powerless to rise, or to utter a single word.

Purandar, trembling with rage, shouted again: "Nani"

Just then Jagamohan entered the room from behind. "Get out of this house," he commanded.

Purandar's whole body began to swell up like an angry cat. Jagamohan insisted: "If you don't get out at once, I will call in the police."

Purandar darted a terrible glance at Nani as he went away. Nani fainted.

Jagamohan now understood the whole situation. He found out by his questions that Satish had been aware that Purandar had seduced Nani: but fearing an angry outbreak he had not informed Jagamohan of the fact.

For days after this incident Nani trembled like a bamboo-leaf. Then she gave birth to a dead child.

One midnight Purandar had driven Nani from the room kicking her in a fit of temper. Since then he had sought her in vain. When he suddenly found her in his uncle's house, he was seized with an uncontrollable passion of jealousy. He was sure that Satish had enticed her away from him, to keep her for his own pleasure, and had then put her in that very

house in order to insult him. This was more than any mortal man could bear.

Harimohan heard all about it. Indeed, Purandar never took any pains to hide these doings from him: for the father looked upon the son's moral aberrations with a kindly indulgence. But Harimohan thought it contrary to all notions of decency for Satish to snatch away this girl whom his elder brother, Purandar, had looked upon with favour. He devoutly hoped that Purandar would be successful in recovering his spoil.

It was the time of the Christmas holidays. Jagamohan attended Nani night and day. One evening he was translating a novel of Sir Walter Scott's to her, when Purandar burst into the room with another young man.

On Jagamohan threatening to call for the police the young man said: "I am Nani's cousin. I have come to take her with me."

Jagamohan caught hold of Purandar by the ncck and shoved him out of the room and down the stairs. He then turned to the other young man, shouting: "You are a villain and a scoundrel! You assert this cousin's right of yours in order to wreck her life, not to protect her."

The young man hurried away. But when he had got to a safe distance, he swore that he would take legal proceedings in order to rescue his ward.

"Open, 0 earth. and hide me away!" was Nani's prayer.

Jagamohan called Satish and said to him: "Let me leave this place and go to some up-country town with Nani. It will kill her if this is repeated."

Satish pointed out that his brother was certain to follow her, once he got the clue.

"Then what do you propose?" asked Jagamohan.

"Let me marry Nani."

"Marry Nanil"

"Yes, according to the civil marriage rites."

Jagamohan stood up, went to Satish and pressed him to his heart.

Since the partition of the house, Harimohan had not once been over to see his elder brother. But that day he came in, dishevelled, and said: *"Dada,* what disaster is this you are planning?"

"I am saving everybody from disaster," replied Jagamohan.

"Satish is just like a son to you," Harimohan pleaded. "Yet you can have the heart to let him be married to that woman of the street!"

"Yes," rejoined Jagamohan, "I have brought him up as my own son, and I consider that my pains have borne fruit at last."

"Dada," said Harimohan, "I humbly acknowledge defeat at your hands. I am willing to write away half my property to you, if only you will not take revenge on me like this."

Jagamohan started up from his chair as he bellowed out: "You want to throw me your dirty leavings, as you throw a dog a bone! I am an atheist-remember that! I am not a pious man like you! I neither take revenge, nor beg for favours."

Harimohan hastened round to his son's lodgings. He cried out to him: "Satish! What in the world are you about to do? Can you think of no other way of ruining yourself? Are you determined to plunge the whole family into this hideous shame?"

Satish calmly answered: "I have no particular desire to marry. I am doing it in order to save the family from hideous shame."

Harimohan was shocked: "Have you not the least spark of conscience left in you? That girl, who is almost like a wife to your brother—"

Satish caught him up sharply: "Wife!" he exclaimed. "Pollute not that word, sir, I pray you."

After that Harimohan became wildly abusive, and Satish remained silent.

What troubled Harimohan most was that Purandar openly advertised his intention to commit suicide if Satish married Nani. Purandar's wife merely told her husband with her compliments that this would be the best solution of a difficult problem, if only he could muster up the courage to do it!

Satish had sedulously maintained a distance from Nani all these days, but when the proposed marriage was settled, Jagamohan suggested that Satish and Nani should try to know each other better, before they were united in wedlock. Satish consented.

Jagamohan fixed a day for their first talk together. He said to Nani: "My *little mother, you* must dress yourself up for the occasion."

Nani bent her eyes to the ground, hesitating.

"No, no," he insisted, "don't be shy, Nani. I have a great longing to see you nicely dressed, and you really must satisfy my desire." He had specially selected a Benares silk sari with a suitable bodice and veil for Nani. These he now handed her.

Nani prostrated herself at his feet. This made Jagamohan get up hurriedly.

He snatched away his feet from her embrace, protesting: "I am afraid, Nani, I have miserably failed in clearing your mind of all this superstitious reverence. I may be your elder in age, but don't you know you are greater than I am, for you are my mother?"

He then kissed her on the forehead, telling her: "I have an invitation to dine out, and I shall be late coming back this evening."

Nani clasped his hand. "Baba, I want your blessing

tonight," was all she said.

"Mother," replied Jagamohan, "I see that you are determined to turn me into a believer in my old age. I wouldn't give a brass farthing for a blessing, myself. Yet I cannot help blessing you, every time I look on you."

Jagamohan put his hand under her chin, and raised her face, and gazed into it silently, while the tears ran down her cheeks.

5

In the evening a man ran up to the place where Jagamohan was having his dinner, and brought him back to his house.

He found the dead body of Nani, stretched on the bed, dressed in the things he had given her. In her hand was a letter. Satish was standing by her head. Jagamohan opened the letter and read:

Baba, forgive me. I cannot do what you wanted. I have tried my best, for your sake, but I could never forget him. :My thousand salutations to your gracious feet.

Nanibala, the sinner

Satish

1

THE last words of Jagamohan, the atheist, to his nephew, Satish, were: "If you have a fancy for funeral ceremony, don't waste it on your uncle,- reserve it for your father."

This is how he came by his death.

When the plague first broke out in Calcutta, the poor citizens were less afraid of the epidemic than of the preventive staff who wore its badge. Satish's father, Harimohan, was sure that their Mussalman neighbours, the untouchable leather-dealers, would be the first to catch it, and then defile him and his kith and kin by dragging them along into a common end. Before he fled from his house, Harimohan went over to offer refuge to his elder brother, saying: "I have taken a house on the river at Kalna, if you-"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Jagamohan. "How can I desert these people?"

"Which people?"

"These leather-dealers of ours."

Harimohan made a grimace and left his brother without further parley. He proceeded to his son's lodgings, and to him simply said: "Come along."

Satish's refusal was equally laconic. "I have work to do here," he replied.

"As pall bearer to the leather-dealers, I suppose?"

"Yes sir, that is, if my services be needed."

"Yes sir, indeed! You scamp, you scoundrel, you atheist' If need be you're quite ready to consign fourteen generations of your ancestors to perdition, I have no doubt!"

Convinced that the *kaliyuga* had touched its lowest depth, Harimohan returned home, despairing of the salvation of his of kin. To protect himself against contamination he covered sheets of foolscap with the name of Kali, the protecting goddess, in his neatest handwriting.

Harimohan left Calcutta. The plague and the preventive officials duly made their appearance in the locality; and for dread of being dragged off to the plague hospital, the wretched victims dared not call in medical aid. After a visit to one of these hospitals, Jagamohan shook his head and remarked: "What if these people are falling ill,-that does not make them criminals."

Jagamohan schemed and contrived till he obtained permission to use his own house as a private plague hospital. Some of us students offered to assist Satish in nursing; there was also a qualified doctor amongst us.

The first patient in our hospital was a Mussalman. He died. The next was Jagamohan himself. He did not survive

either. He said to Satish: "The religion I have all along followed has given me its last reward. There is nothing to complain of."

Satish had never *taken the dust* of his uncle's feet while living. After Jagamohan's death he made that obeisance for the first and last time.

"Fit death for an atheist!" scoffed Harimohan when he first came across Satish after the cremation. "That is so, sir!" agreed Satish, proudly.

2

Just as when the flame is blown out, the light suddenly and completely disappears, so did Satish after his uncle's death. He went out of our ken altogether.

We had never been able to fathom how deeply Satish loved his uncle. Jagamohan was alike father and friend to him and, it pray be said, son as well; for the old man had been so regardless of himself, so unmindful of worldly concerns, that it used to be one of the chief cares of Satish to look after him, keep him safe from disaster. Thus had Satish received from and given to his uncle, his all.

What the bleakness of his bereavement meant for Satish, it was impossible for us to conceive.He struggled against the agony of negation, refusing to believe that such absolute blankness could be true: that there could be emptiness so desolate as to be void even of Truth. If that which seemed one vast 'No' had not also its aspect of 'Yes', would not the whole universe leak away, through its yawning gap, into nothingness?

For two years Satish wandered from place to place;-we had no touch with him. We threw ourselves with all the greater zeal into our self-appointed tasks. We made it a special point to shock those who professed belief in any kind of religion, and the fields of good work we selected were such that not a good soul had a good word left for us. Satish had been our flower; when he dropped off, we, the thorns, cast off our sheaths and gloried in our sharpness.

3

Two years had passed since we lost sight of Satish. My mind revolted against harbouring the least thing evil against him, nevertheless I could not help suspecting that the high pitch, at which he used to be kept strung, must have been flattened down by this shock.

Uncle Jagamohan had once said of a sannyasin:

"As the money-changer tests the ring of each coin, so does the world test each man by the response he gives to shocks of loss and pain, the resistance he offers to the craze for cheap salvation. Those who fail to ring true are cast aside as worthless. These wandering ascetics have been so rejected, as being unfit to take part in the world's commerce; yet the vagabonds swagger about, boasting that it is they who have renounced the world! The worthy are permitted no loophole of escape from duty-only withered leaves are allowed to fall off the tree."

Had it come to this, that Satish, of all people, had joined the ranks of the withered and the worthless? Was he then fated to leave on the black touchstone of bereavement his mark of spuriousness?

While assailed with these misgivings, news suddenly reached us that Satish (our Satish, if you please!) was making the welkin resound with his cymbals in some out-of-the-way village, singing frenzied *kirtans* as follower of Lilananda Swami, the Vaishnava revivalist!

It had passed my comprehension, when I first began to know Satish, how he could ever have come to be an atheist. I was now equally at a loss to understand how Lilananda Swami could have managed to lead him such a dance with his *kirtans.*

And how on earth were we to show our faces? What laughter there would be in the camp of the enemy-whose number, thanks to our folly, was legion! Our band waxed mightily worth with Satish. Many of them said they had known from the very first, that there was no rational substance in hint- he was all frothy idealism. And I now discovered how much I really loved Satish. He had dealt his ardent sect of atheists their death blow-yet I could not be angry with him.

4

Off I started to hunt up Lilananda Swami. river after river I crossed, and trudged over endless fields. The nights I spent in grocers' shops. At last in one of the villages I came up against Satish's party.

It was then two o'clock in the afternoon. I had been hoping to catch Satish alone. Impossible! The cottage which was honoured with the Swami's presence was packed round with crowds of his disciples. There had been *kirtans* all the morning; those who had come from a distance were now waiting to have their meal served.

As soon as Satish caught sight of me, he bounded up and embraced me fervidly. I was staggered. Satish had always been extremely reserved. His outward calm had ever been the only measure of his depth of feeling. He now appeared as though intoxicated.

The Swami was resting in the front room, with the door ajar. He could see us. At once came the call, in a deep voice: "Satish!"

Satish was back inside, all in a flurry.

"Who is that?" inquired the Swami.

"Srivilas, a great friend of mine," Satish reported.

During these years I had managed to make a name for myself in our little world. A learned Englishman had remarked

on hearing one of my English speeches:

"The man has a wonderful-"but let that be, why add to the number of my enemies? Suffice it to say that, from the students up to the students' forbears, the reputation had travelled round that I was a rampaging atheist who could bestride the English language and race her over the hurdles at break-neck speed in the most marvellous manner.

I somehow felt that the Swami was pleased to have me here. He sent for me. I merely hinted at the usual salutation as I entered his room, that is to say, my joined hands were uplifted, but my head was not lowered. Staunch pupils of Uncle Jagamohan as we were, our reverence was not directed to any outward object, as from a bent bow, but remained defiantly erect, like a bayonet oil guard.

This did not escape the Swami. "Here, Satish!" he ordered. "Fill me that pipe of mine."

Satish set to work. But as he lit the tinder, it was I who was set ablaze within. Moreover, I was getting fidgety, not knowing where to sit. The only seat in the room was a wooden bedstead on which was spread the Swami's carpet. Not that I confessed to any qualms about occupying a corner of the same carpet on which the great man was installed, but somehow my sitting down did not come off. I remained standing near the door.

It appeared that the Swami was aware of my having won the *Premchand-Roychand* scholarship. "My son," he said to me, "it is good for the pearl diver if he succeeds in reaching the bottom, but he would die if he had to stay there. He must come up for the free breath of life. If you would live, you must now come up to the light, out of the depths of your learning. You have enjoyed the fruits of your scholarship, now try a taste of the joys of its renunciation."

Satish handed his master the lighted pipe and sat down on the bare floor near his feet. The Swami leant back and stretched his legs out towards Satish, who began gently to massage them. This was more than I could stand. I left the room. I could, of course, see that this ordering about of Satish and making him fag, was deliberately directed at me.

The Swami went on resting. All the guests were duly served by the householder with a meal of kedgeree. From five o'clock the *kirtans* started again and went on till ten in the night.

When I got Satish alone at last, 1 said to him "Look here, old fellow you have been brought up in the atmosphere of freedom from infancy. How have you managed to get yourself entangled in this kind of bondage today? Is Uncle Jagamohan, then, so utterly dead?"

Partly because the playfulness of affection prompted it, partly, perhaps, because precision of description required it, Satish used to reverse the first two syllables of my name and call me Visri.[1]

"Visri," he replied, "while Uncle was alive, he gave me freedom in life's field of work, the freedom which the child gets in the playground. After his death it is he, again, who has given me freedom on the high seas of emotion,- the freedom which the child gains when it comes back to its mother's arms. I have enjoyed to the full the freedom of life's daytime; why should I now deprive myself of the freedom of its evening? Be sure that both these are the gift of that same uncle of ours."

"Whatever you may say," I persisted, "Uncle could have nothing to do with this kind of pipe filling, leg-stroking business. Surely this is no picture of freedom."

"That," argued Satish, "was the freedom on shore. There, Uncle gave full liberty of action to our limbs. This is freedom on the ocean. Here the confinement of the ship is necessary for our progress. That is why my Master keeps me bound to his service. This massaging is helping me to cross over."

"It does not sound so bad," I admitted, "the way you put it. But, all the same, I have no patience with a man who can thrust out his legs at you 'like that."

"He can do it," explained Satish, "because he has no need of such service. Had it been for himself, he, might have felt ashamed to ask it. The need is mine,"

I realized that the world into which Satish had been transported had no place for me, his particular friend. The person, whom Satish had so effusively embraced, was not I, Srivilas, but a representative of all humanity, just an idea. Such ideas are like wine. When they get into the head, anyone can be embraced and wept over,- I, only as much as anybody else. But whatever joys may be the portion of the ecstatic one, what can such embrace signify to me, the other party? What satisfaction am I to get, merely to be accounted one of the ripples on a grand, difference - obliterating flood, -I, the individual I?

However, further argument was clearly useless. Nor could I make up my mind to desert Satish. So, as his satellite, I also danced front village to village, carried along the current of *kirtan* singing.

The intoxication of it gradually took hold of me. I also embraced all and sundry, wept without provocation, and tended the feet of the Master. And one day, in a moment of curious exaltation, Satish was revealed to me in a light, for which there can be no other name than divine.

5

With the capture of two such egregious, college-educated atheists, as we were, the fame of Lilananda Swami spread far and wide. His Calcutta disciples now pressed him to take up his head-quarters at the metropolis.

So Swami Lilananda came on to Calcutta.

Shivatosh had been a devoted follower of Lilananda. Whenever the Swami visited Calcutta, he had stayed with Shivatosh. And it was the one delight of Shivatosh's life to

serve the Master together with all his disciples, when they thus, honoured his house. When he died he bequeathed all his property to the Swami, leaving only a life-interest in the income to his young childless widow It was his hope that this house of his would become a pilgrim-centre for the Sect.

This was the house where we now went into residence.

During our ecstatic progress through the villages I had been in an elated mood, which I now found difficult to keep up in Calcutta. In the wonderland of emotion where we had been revelling, the mystic drama of the courting of the Bride within us and the Bridegroom who is everywhere, was being played. And a fitting accompaniment to it had been the symphony of the broad grazing greens, the shaded ferry landing places, the enraptured expanse of the noon-day leisure, the deep evening silences vibrant with the tremolo of cicadas. Ours had been a dream progress to which the open skies of the country-side offered no obstacle. But with our arrival at Calcutta, we knocked our heads against its hardness, we got jostled by its crowds, and our dream was at an end.

Yet, was not this the Calcutta where, within the confines of our students' lodgings, we had once put our whole soul into our studies, by day and by night. Where we had pondered over and discussed the problems of our country with our fellow students in the College Square; where we had served as volunteers at the holding of our National Assemblies; where we had responded to the call of Uncle Jagamohan, and taken the vow to free our minds from all slavery imposed by Society or State? Yes, it was in this selfsame Calcutta that, in the flood tide of our youth, we had pursued our course, regardless of the revilement of stranger and kindred alike, proudly breasting all contrary currents like a boat in full sail. Why, then, should we now fail, in this whirlpool of pleasure-and-pain ridden, hunger-and-thirst driven, much-suffering humanity, to keep up the exaltation proper to our tear-saturated cult of Emotional Communion?

As I manfully made the attempt, I was beset with doubts at every step. Was I then a mere weakling: unfaithful to my ideal: unworthy of strenuous endeavour? When I turned to Satish, to see how he fared, I found on his countenance no sign to show that Calcutta, for him, represented any geographical reality whatsoever-in the mystic world where he dwelt, all this city life meant no more than a mirage.

6

We two friends took up our quarters, with the Master, in Shivatosh's house. We had come to be his chief disciples, and he would have us constantly near his person.

With our Master and our fellow disciples, we were absorbed day and night in discussing emotions in general and the philosophy of Spiritual Emotion in particular. Into the very thick of the abstruse complexities which thus engaged our attention, the ripple of a woman's laughter would now and again find its way from the *inner apartments* Sometimes there would be heard, in a clear, high-toned voiced, the call: "Bami!"- evidently a maidservant of that name.

These were doubtless but trivial interruptions of minds soaring, almost to vanishing point, into the empyrean of idea. But to me they came as a grateful shower of rain upon a parched and thirsty soil. When little touches of life, like shed flower petals, were blown across from the unknown world behind the wall, then all in a moment I could understand that the wonderland of our quest was just there: there, where the keys jingled, tied to the corner of Bami's *sari*; where from the floors rose the sound of the broom, and from the kitchen the savour of the cooking-all trifles, but all true. That world, with its commingling of fine and coarse, bitter and sweet-that itself was the heaven where Emotion truly held sway.

The name of the widow was Damini. We could catch momentary glimpses of her through opening doors and flapping curtains. But the two of us grew to be so much part and parcel of the Master, that very soon these doors and curtains were no longer barriers in our case.

Damini was the lightning which gleams within the massed clouds of July. Without, the curves of youth enveloped her in their fulness: within, flashed fitful fires. Thus runs an entry in Satish's diary:

"In Nanibala I have seen the Universal Woman in one of the aspects,- the woman who takes on herself the whole burden of sin, who gives up life itself for the sinner's sake, who in dying leaves for the world the balm of immortality. In Damini I see another aspect of Universal Woman. This one has nothing to do with death; she is the Artist of the art of Life. She blossoms out, in limitless profusion, in form and scent and movement. She is not for rejection; refuses to entertain the ascetic; and is vowed to resist the least farthing of payment to the tax-gathering Winter Wind."

It is necessary to relate Damini's previous history.

At the time when the coffers of her father Annada, were overflowing with the proceeds of his jute business, Damini was married to Shivatosh. So long, Shivatosh's fortune had consisted only in his pedigree: it could now count a more substantial addition. Annada bestowed on his son-in-law house in Calcutta and sufficient money to keep him for life. There were also lavish gifts of furniture and ornaments made to his daughter.

Annada, further, made a futile attempt to take Shivatosh into his own business-but the latter had no interest in worldly concerns. An astrologer had once predicted to Shivatosh that, on the happening of a special conjunction of the stars, his soul would gain its emancipation whilst still in the flesh. From that day he lived in this hope alone, and ceased to find charm in riches, or even in objects still more charming. It was while in this frame of mind that he had become a disciple of Lilananda Swami.

In the meantime, with the subsidence of the jute boom, the full force of the adverse wind caught the heavy-laden bark of Annada's fortune and toppled it over. All his property

was sold up and he had hardly enough left to make a bare living.

One evening, Shivatosh came into the inner apartments and said to his wife: "The Master is here. He has some words of advice for you, and bids you attend."

"I cannot go to him now," answered Damini. "I haven't the time."

What? No time! Shivatosh went up nearer and found his wife seated in the gathering dusk, in front of the open safe, with her ornaments spread out before her.

"What in the world is keeping you?" inquired he.

"I am arranging my jewels," was the reply.

So that was the reason for her lack of time. Indeed!

The next day, when Damini opened the safe, she found her jewel box missing. "My jewels?" she exclaimed, turning inquiringly to her husband.

"But you offered them to the Master. Did not his call reach you at the very moment? For he sees into the minds of men. He has deigned, in his mercy, to save you from the lure of pelf."

Damini's indignation rose to white heat. "Give me back my ornaments!" she commanded.

"Why, what will you do with them?"

"They were my father's gift to me. I would return them to him."

"They have gone to a better place," said Shivatosh. "Instead of pandering to worldly needs they are dedicated to the service of devotees."

That is how the tyrannical imposition of faith began. And the pious ritual of exorcism, in all its cruelty, continued to be practised in order to rid Damini's mind of its mundane affections and desires.

So, while her father and her little brothers were starving by inches, Damini had to prepare daily, with her own hands, meals for the sixty or seventy disciples who thronged the house with the Master. She would sometimes rebelliously leave out the salt, or contrive to get the viands scorched, but that did not avail to gain her any respite from her penance.

At this juncture, Shivatosh died; and in departing he awarded his wife the supreme penalty for her want of faith: he committed his widow, with all her belongings, to the guardianship of the Master.

7

The house was in a constant tumult with rising waves of fervour. Devotees kept streaming in from all quarters to sit at the feet of the Master. And yet Damini, who had gained the Presence without effort of her own, thrust aside her good fortune with contumely.

Did the Master call her for some special mark of his favour? She would keep aloof pleading a headache. If he had occasion to complain of some special omission of personal attention on her part, she would confess to have been away at the theatre. The excuse was lacking in truth, but not in rudeness.

The other women disciples were aghast at Damini's ways. Firstly, her attire was not such as widows should affect. Secondly, she showed no eagerness to drink in the Master's words of wisdom. Lastly, her demeanour had none of the reverential restraint which the Master's presence demanded. "What a woman!" exclaimed they, "many a hoyden have we seen, but not one so outrageous."

The Swami used to smile. "The Lord," said he, "takes a special delight in wrestling with a valiant opponent. When Damini will have to own defeat, her surrender will be absolute."

He began to display an exaggerated tolerance for her contumacy. That vexed Damini still worse, for she looked on it as a more cunning form of punishment.

And one day the Master caught her in a fit of laughter, mimicking to one of her companions the ultrasuavity of his manner towards herself. Still he had not a word of rebuke, and repeated simply that the final denouement would be all the more extraordinary, to which end the poor thing was but the instrument of providence and so herself not to blame.

This was how we found her when we first came. The denouement was indeed extraordinary. I can hardly bring myself to write on further; what happened, moreover, is so difficult to tell. The network of suffering, which is woven behind the scenes, is not of any pattern set by the scriptures, nor of our own devising either. Hence the frequent discords between the inner and the outer life-discords that hurt, and wail forth in tears.

There came, at length, the dawn when the harsh crust of rebelliousness cracked and fell to pieces, and the flower of self-surrender came through and held up its dew-washed face. Damini's service became so beautiful in its truth, that it descended on the devotees like the blessing of the very Divinity of their devotions.

And when Damini's lightning flashes had matured into a steady radiance, Satish looked on her and saw that she was beautiful; but I say this, that Satish gazed only on her beauty, failing to see Damini herself.

In Satish's room there hung a portrait of the Swami sitting in meditation, done on a porcelain medallion. One day he found it on the floor-in fragments. He put it down to his pet cat. But other little mischiefs began to follow, which were clearly beyond the powers of the cat. There was some kind of disturbance in the air which now and again broke out in unseen electric shocks.

How others felt, I know not, but a growing pain gnawed at my heart. Sometimes I thought that this constant ecstacy

of emotion was proving too much for me. I wanted to give it all up and run away. The old work of teaching the leather-dealers' children seemed, in its unalloyed prose, to be now calling me back.

One wintry afternoon, when the Master was taking his siesta, and the weary disciples were at rest, Satish for some reason went off into his own room at this unusual hour. His progress was suddenly arrested at the threshold. There was Damini, her thick tresses dishevelled, lying prone on the floor, beating her head on it as she moaned: "Oh you stone, you stone, have mercy on me, have mercy and kill me outright!"

Satish, all a-tremble with a nameless fear, fled from the door.

8

It was a rule with Swami Lilananda to go off once a year to some remote, out-of-the-way place, away from the crowd. With the month of *Magh*[1] came round the time for his journey. Satish was to attend on him.

I asked to go too. I was worn to the very marrow with the incessant emotional excitement of our cult; and felt greatly in need of physical movement as well as of mental quiet.

The Master sent for Damini. "My *little mother,*"he told her, "I am about to leave you for the duration of my travels. Let me arrange for your stay meanwhile, with your aunt as usual."

"I would accompany you," said Damini.

"You could hardly bear it, I am afraid. Our journeying will be troublesome."

"Of course I can bear it," she answered. "Pray have no concern about any trouble of mine."

Lilananda was pleased at this proof of Damini's devotion. In former years this opportunity had been Damini's holiday time-the one thing to which she had looked forward through the preceding months. "Miraculous!" thought the Swami. "How wondrously does even stone become as wax in the Lord's melting-pot of emotion."

So Damini had her way, and came along with us.

9

The spot at which we arrived, after hours of tramping in the sun, was a little, coconut-palm-shaded promontory on the sea coast. Profound was the solitude and the tranquillity which reigned there, as the gentle rustle of its palm tassels merged into the idle splash of the girdling sea. It looked like a tired hand of the sleepy shore, limply fallen upon the surface of the waters. On the palm of this hand, stood a bluish-green hill; and inside the hill was a sculptured cave-temple of yore,-being, for all its serene beauty, the cause of much disquiet amongst antiquarians as to the origin, style and subject matter of its sculptures.

Our intention had been to return to the village where we had made our halt, after paying a visit to this temple. That was now seen to be impossible. The day was fast declining and the moon was long past its full. Lilananda Swami at length decided that we should pass the night in the cave.

All four of us sat down to rest on the sandy soil beneath the coconut groves fringing the sea. The sunset glow bent lower and lower over the western horizon, as though Day was making its parting obeisance to approaching Night.

The master's voice broke forth in song-one of his own compositions,

The day has waned, when at last we meet at the fuming,

And as I try to see your face, the last ray of evening

fades into the night.

We had heard the song before, but never with such complete rapport between singer, audience and surroundings. Damini was affected to tears. The Swami went on to the second verse

I shall not grieve that the darkness comes between thee and my sight,-

Only, for a moment, stand before me that may kiss thy feet had wipe them with my hair

When he had come to the end, the placid eventide, enveloping sky and waters, was filled, like some ripe, golden fruit, with the bursting sweetness of melody.

Damini rose and went up to the Master. As she prostrated herself at his feet, her loose hair slipped off her shoulders and was scattered over the ground on either side. She remained long thus, before she raised her head.

10

From Satish's Diary

There were several chambers within the temple. In one of these I spread my blanket and laid myself down. The darkness pent up inside the cave seemed alive, like some great black monster, its damp breath bedewing my body. I began to be haunted by the idea that this was the first of created animals, born in the beginning of time, with no eyes or ears, but just one enormous appetite. Confined within this cavern for endless ages, it knew nothing, having no mind; but having sensibility, it felt; and wept and wept, in silence.

Fatigue overpowered my limbs like a dead-weight, but sleep came not. Some bird, or perhaps bat, flitted in from the outside, or out from the inside,-its wings beating the air as it flew from darkness to darkness; when the draught reached my body it sent a shiver through me, making my flesh creep.

I thought I would go and get some sleep outside. But I

could not recollect the direction in which the entrance was. As I crawled on my hands and knees along the way which appeared the right one, I knocked against the cave wall. When I tried a different side I nearly tumbled into a hollow in which the water dribbling through the cracks had collected.

I crawled back to my blanket and stretched myself on it again. Again was I possessed with the fancy that I had been taken right into the creature's maw, and could not extricate myself; that I was the victim of a blind hunger which was licking me with its slimy saliva, through which I would be sucked and digested noiselessly, little by little.

I felt that only sleep could save me. My living, waking consciousness was evidently unable to bear such close embrace of this horrible, suffocating, obscurity—fit only for the dead to suffer. I cannot say how long after it came,-or whether it was really sleep at all,-but a thin veil of oblivion fell at last over my senses. And while in such half-conscious state I actually felt a deep breathing somewhere near my bare feet.

Surely not that primeval creature of my imagining!

Then something seemed to cling about my feet. Some real wild animal this time,-was my first thought. But there was nothing furry in its touch. What if it was some species of serpent or reptile, of features and body unknown to me, of whose method of absorbing its prey I could form no idea? All the more loathsome seemed the softness of it,—of this terrible, unknown, mass of hunger.

What between dread and disgust, I could not even utter a cry. I tried to push it away with ineffectual leg thrusts. Its face seemed to be touching my feet, on which its panting breath fell thickly. What kind of a face had it, I wondered. I launched a more vigorous kick, as the stupor left me. I had at first supposed there was no fur, but what felt like a mane now brushed across my legs. I struggled up into a sitting posture.

Something went away in the darkness. There was also a curious kind of a sound. Could it have been sobbing?

Damini

1

WE are back in our quarters in the village, near a temple, in a two storeyed house belonging to one of the Swami's disciples, which had been placed at our disposal. Since our return we see but little of Damini, though she is still in charge of our household affairs. She has made friends with the neighbouring women and spends most of her off time going about with them from the house of this one to that of the other.

The Swami is not particularly pleased. Daminis heart, thinks he, does not yet respond to the call of the ethereal heights, all its fondness is still for earthen walls. In her daily work of looking after the devotee slatterly like an act of worship with her-a trace of weariness has become noticeable. She makes mistakes. Her service has lost its radiance.

The Master begins to be afraid of her again, at heart. Between her brows there darkens a gathering frown; her temper is ruffled with fitful breezes; the loosening knot of her hair lowers over her neck; the pressure of her lips, the gleams from the corner of her eye, her sudden wayward gestures presage a rebellious storm.

The Swami turned to his *kirtans* with renewed attention. The wandering bee, he hoped, would be brought to drink deep of the honey, once enticed in by its fragrance. And so the short winter days were filled to the brim with the foaming wine of ecstatic song.

But no, Damini refused to be caught. The exasperated Swami laughed out one day: "The Lord is out hunting: the resolute flight of the deer adds zest to the chase: but succumb she must, in the end."

When we had first come to know Damini, she was not to be found amongst the band of devotees clustering round the Master. That, however, did not attract our notice then. Her empty place had now become conspicuous. Her frequent absences smote us tempestuously.

The Swami put this down to her pride, and that hurt his own pride. As for me,—but what does it matter what I thought?

One day the Master mustered up the courage to say in his most dulcet tones: "Damini, my *little mother,* do you think you will have a little time to spare this afternoon? If so-"

"No," said Damini.

"Would you mind telling me why?"

'I have to assist in making sweetmeats at the Nandis."

"Sweetmeats! What for?"

"They have a wedding on."

"Is your assistance so indispensably-?"

"I promised to be there."

Damini whisked out of the room without waiting for further questioning.

Satish, who was there with us, was dumbfounded. So many men of learning, wealth and fame had surrendered at the feet of the Master, and this slip of a girl-what gave her such hardihood of assurance?

Another evening Damini happened to be at home. The Master had addressed himself to some specially important topic. After his discourse had progressed awhile, something in our faces gave him pause. He found our attention wandering. On looking round he discovered that Damini, who had been seated in the room, sewing in hand, was not to be seen. He understood the reason of our distraction. She was not there, not there, not there,-the refrain now kept worrying him too. He began to lose the thread of his discourse and at last gave it up altogether.

The Swami left the room and went off to Damini's door. "Damini!" he called. "Why are you all alone here? Will you not come and join us?"

"I am engaged," said Damini.

The baffled Swami could see, as he passed by the half-open door, a captive kite in a cage. It had somehow struck against the telegraph wires, and had been lying wounded, when Damini rescued it from the pestering crows; and she had been tending it since.

The kite was not the only object which engaged Damini's solicitude There was a mongrel pup, whose looks were on a par with its breeding. It was discord personified. Whenever it heard our cymbals it would look up to heaven and voice forth a prolonged complaint. The gods, being fortunate, did not feel bound to give it a hearing. The poor mortals whose ears happened to be within reach were woefully agonized.

One afternoon, when Damini was engaged in practising horticulture in sundry cracked pots on the roof –terrace, Satish came up and asked her point blank:

"Why is it you have given up coming over there altogether?"

"Over where?"

"To the Master."

"Why, what need have you people of me?" "We have no need,-but surely the need is yours." "No, no! flung out Damini. "Not at all, not at all!" Taken aback by her heat, Satish gazed at her in silence. Then he mused aloud: "Your mind lacks peace.

If you would gain peace-"

"Peace from you? You who are consumed day and night with your Excitement,- where have you the peace to give? Leave me alone, I beg and pray you. I was at peace. I would be at peace."

"You see but the waves on the surface. If you have the patience to dive deep, you will find all calm there."

Damini wrung her hands as she cried: "I beseech you, for the Lord's sake, don't insist on my diving downwards. If only you will give up all hope of my conversion, I may yet live!"

2

My experience has never been large enough to enable me to penetrate the mysteries of woman's mind. Judging from what little I have seen of the surface from the outside, I have come to the belief that women are ever ready to bestow their heart where sorrow cannot but be their lot. They will either string their 'garland of acceptance' for some beast who will trample it under foot and defile it in the mire of his passions, or dedicate it to some idealist, on whose neck it will get no hold, attenuated as he is, like the dream-stuff of his imaginings.

When left to do their own choosing, women invariably reject ordinary men like me, made up of gross and fine, who know woman to be just woman,- that is to say, neither a clay doll made to serve for our pastime, nor a transcendental melody to be evoked at our master touch. They reject us because we have neither the forceful delusions of the flesh, nor the roseate illusions of fancy: we can neither break them on the wheel of our desire, nor melt them in the glow of our fervour to be cast in the mould of our ideal.

Because we know them only for what they are, they may be friendly, but cannot love us. We are their true refuge, for they can rely on our devotion, but, our self-dedication comes so easy, they forget that it has a price. So the only reward we get is to be used for their purposes; perchance to win their respect;... but I am afraid my psychological propositions are more likely nothing but personal grievances. The fact probably is, what we thus lose is really our gain; any way, that is how we may console ourselves.

Damini avoids the Master because she cannot bear him. She fights shy of Satish because for him her feelings are of the opposite description. I am the only person, near at hand, with whom there is no question of love or hate. So whenever I am with her, Damini talks away to me of unimportant matters concerning the old days, the present times, or the daily happenings at the neighbours' houses. These talks would usually take place on the shaded part of the roof-terrace, which served as a passage between our several rooms on the second storey, where Damini sat slicing betel-nuts.

What I could not understand is, how these trifling talks should have attracted the notice of Satish's emotion-clouded vision. Granted that the circumstance was not so trifling, but do I not know that, in the world where Satish dwelt, they had no such disturbing things as circumstances, at all? The Mystic Union in which personified cosmic forces were assisting, was an eternal drama, not a historical episode. Those who are rapt

1. In the old days, when a girl had to choose between several suitors, she signified her choice by putting a garland round the neck of the accepted one.

with the undying flute strains borne along the ceaseless zephyrs which play on the banks of the ever-flowing Jamuna of that mystic paradise; one would not suppose that they have —eyes or ears left for the ephemeral doings immediately around them. This much at least is certain, that before our return from the cave, Satish used to be much denser in his mundane perceptions.

For this difference I may have been partly responsible. I also had begun to absent myself from our *kirtans* and discourses, perhaps with a frequency which could not elude even Satish. One day he came round on inquiry, and found me running after Damini's mongoose-a recent acquisition-truing to lure it into bondage with a pot of milk which I had procured from the local milkman. This occupation, viewed as an excuse, was simply hopeless. It could easily have waited till the end of our sitting. For the matter of that, the best thing clearly would have been to leave the mongoose to its own devices, thus at one stroke demonstrating my adherence to the two principal tenets of our cult,-compassion for all creatures, and Passion for the Lord.

That is why, when Satish came up, I had to feel ashamed. I put down the pot then and there, and tried to edge away along the path which led back to self-respect.

But Damini's behaviour took me by surprise. She was not in the least abashed as she asked: 'Where are you off to, Srivilas Babu?"

I scratched my head as I mumbled: "I was thinking of joining the-"

"They must have finished by this time. Do sit down."

This coming from Damini, in the presence of Satish, made my ears redden.

Damini turned to Satish. "I am in awful trouble with the mongoose," she said. "Last night it stole a chicken from the mussalman quarters over there. I dare not leave it loose any longer. Srlvtlas Babu has promised to look out for a nice big hamper to keep it in."

It seemed to me that it was my devotion to her which Damini was using the mongoose to show off. I was reminded how the Swami had ordered about Satish to impress me. The two were the same thing.

Satish made no reply and his departure was somewhat abrupt. I gazed on Damini and could see her eyes flash out as they followed his disappearing figure; while on her lips there set a hard, enigmatic smile.

What conclusion Damini had come to, she knew best; the only result apparent to me was, that she began to send for me on all kinds of flimsy pretexts. Sometimes she would make sweetmeats, which she pressed on me.

One day I could not help suggesting: "Let's offer some to Satish as well."

"That would only annoy him," said Damini.

And it happened that Satish, passing that way, caught me in the act of being thus regaled.

In the drama which was being played, the hero and the heroine spoke their parts 'aside'. I was the one character who, being of no consequence, had to speak out. This sometimes made me curse my lot; none the less, I could not withstand the temptation of the petty cash with which I was paid off, from day to day, for taking up the role of middleman. What a situation to be in!

3

For some days Satish clanged his cymbals and danced his *kirtans* with added vigour. Then, one day he came to me and said: "We cannot keep Damini with us any longer."

"Why?" I asked.

"We must free ourselves altogether from the influence of Woman."

"If that be a necessity," ;aid I, "there must be something radically wrong with our system."

Satish stared at me in amazement.

"Woman is a natural phenomenon," I continued undaunted, "who will have her place in the world, however much we may try to get rid of her. If your spiritual welfare depends on ignoring her existence, then its pursuit will be like the chasing of a phantom, and will shame you so, when the illusion is dissipated, that you will not know where to hide yourself."

"Oh stop your philosophizing!" exclaimed Satish. "I was talking practical politics. It is only too evident that women are emissaries of *Maya,* and at her behest ply on us their blandishments-for they cannot fulfil the design of their Mistress unless they overpower our reason. So we must steer clear of them if we would keep our intellect free."

I was about to make my reply, when Satish stopped me with a gesture and went on: "Visri, old fellow! Let me tell you plainly: if the hand of *Maya* is not visible to you, that is because you have allowed yourself to be caught in her net. The vision of Beauty with which she has ensnared you today will vanish as soon as its purpose is accomplished, and with the beauty will disappear the spectacles of desire through which you now see it as greater than all the world. Where the noose of *Maya* is so glaringly obvious, why be foolhardy enough to take risks?"

"I admit all that," I rejoined. "But, my dear fellow, the all-pervading net of *Maya* was not cast by my hands, nor do I know the way to escape round it. Since we have not the power to evade *Maya,* our spiritual striving should help us, while acknowledging her, to rise above her. Because it does not take such course, we have to flounder about in vain attempts to cut away the half of Truth."

"Well, well, let's have your idea of spiritual striving a little

more clearly," said Satish.

"We must sail the boat of our life," I proceeded, "along the current of Nature, in order to reach beyond it. Our problem is, not how to get rid of this current, but how to keep the boat afloat in its channel, until it is through. For that a rudder is necessary."

"You people who have ceased to be loyal to the Master-how can I make you understand that in him we have just this rudder? You would regulate your spiritual life according to your own whims. That way death lies!" With this Satish betook himself to the Master's chamber and fell to tending his feet with fervour.

The same evening, when Satish lit the Master's pipe, he also preferred his plaint against *Maya* and her emissaries. The smoking of one pipe, however, did not suffice for its adjudication. Evening after evening, pipe after pipe was exhausted, yet the Master was unable to make up his mind.

From the very beginning, Damini had given the Swami no end of trouble. Now the girl had managed to set up this eddy in the midst of the smooth current of the devotees' progress. But Shivatosh had thrown her and her belongings so absolutely on the Master's hand that he knew not how or where to cast her off. What made it more difficult still was, that he harboured a secret fear of his ward.

And Satish-for all the doubled and quadrupled enthusiasm which he put into his *kirtans,* for all the pipe-filling and massaging in which he tried to rest his heart-the poor fellow was not allowed to forget for a moment that *Maya* had taken up her position right across the line of his spiritual advance.

One day some kirtanists of repute had arrived, and were to sing in the evening at the temple next door. The *kirtan* would last far into the night. I managed to slip away after the preliminary overture, having no doubt that, in so thick a crowd, no one would notice my absence.

Damini, that evening, had completely thrown off her reserve. Things which are difficult to speak of, which refuse to leave one's choking throat, flowed from her lips so simply, so sweetly. It was as if she had suddenly come upon some secret recess in her heart, so long hidden away in darkness-as if, by some strange chance, she had gained the opportunity to stand before her own self, face to face.

Just at this time, Satish came up from behind and stood there hesitating, without our being aware of it at the moment. Not that Damini was saying anything very particular, but there were tears in her eyes,- all her words, in fact, were the welling up from some tear-flooded depth. When Satish arrived, the *kirtan* could not have been anywhere near its end. I divined that he must have been goaded with repeated inward urgings, to have left the temple then.

As Satish came round into our view, Damini rose with a start, wiped her eyes and made off towards her room. Satish with a tremor in his voice said: "Damini, will you listen to me? I would have a word with you."

Damini slowly retraced her steps and came and sat down again. I made as though to take myself off, but an imploring glance from her restrained me from stirring. Satish, who seemed to have made some kind of effort meanwhile, came straight to the point.

"The need," said he to Damini, "which brought the rest of us to the Master, was not yours when you came to him."

"No," avowed Damini, expectantly.

"Why, then, do you stay amongst his devotees?"

Damini's eyes flamed up as she cried: "Why do I stay? Did I come of my own accord? Was not this helpless creature, for all her lack of faith, bound hand and foot by your devotees into this dungeon of devotion? What avenue of escape have you left me?"

"We have now decided," stated Satish, "that if you would go to stay with some relative, all your expenses will be found."

"You have decided, have you?"

"Yes."

"Well then,-I have not!"

"Why, how will that inconvenience you?"

"Am I a piece in your game, that you devotees shall play me now this way, now the other?"

Satish was struck dumb.

"I did not come," continued Damini, "wanting to please your devotees. And I am not going away, at the bidding of the lot of you, merely because I don't happen to please you!"

Damini covered her face with her hands and burst out sobbing as she ran into her room and slammed the door.

Satish did not return to the *kirtan* singing. He sank down in a corner of the adjoining roof-terrace and brooded there in silence.

The sound of the breakers on the distant sea-shore came, wafted along the south breeze, like despairing sighs, rising up to the watching star-clusters, from the very heart of the Earth.

I spent the night wandering round and round through the dark, deserted village lanes.

"But Damini," urged the Swami in his desperation, "can I keep you with me for ever?" "Is that a question for me to answer?" "But where will you go when I am dead?" "I was never allowed," returned Damini icily, "to have the responsibility of thinking that out. I have been made to realize too well that in this world I have neither father nor brother; neither home nor property; nothing at all to call my own. That is what makes my burden so heavy to bear. It pleased you to take it up. You shall not now cast it on another!" Damini went off. "Lord, have mercy!" sighed the Swami. Damini had laid on me the command to procure for her some good Bengali

books. I need hardly say, that by `good' Damini did not mean spiritual, of the quality affected by our sect. Nor need I pause to make it clear, that Damini had no compunction in asking anything from me. It had not taken her long to find out that making demands on me was the easiest way of making me amend. Some. kind of tree is all the better for being pruned: that was the kind of person I seemed to be where Damini was concerned.

Well, the books I ordered were unmitigatedly modern. The author was distinctly less influenced by Mance, than by man himself. The packet was delivered by the postman to the Swami. He raised his eyebrows as he opened it, and asked: "Hullo, Srivilas, what are these for?"

I remained silent.

The Master gingerly turned over some of the pages, as he remarked for my benefit that he had never thought much of the author, having failed to find in his writings the correct spiritual flavour.

"If you read them carefully, Sir," I suddenly blurted out, "you will find his writings not to be lacking in the flavour of Truth!" The fact is, rebellion had been long brewing within me. I was feeling done to death with mystic emotion. I was nauseated with slobbering over abstract human feelings, to the neglect of living human creatures.

The Master blinked at me curiously before he replied: "Very well, my son, carefully read them I will!" with which he tucked the books away under the bolster on which he reclined. I could perceive that his idea was not to surrender them to me.

Damini, from behind the door, must have got wind of this, for at once she stepped in and asked: "Haven't the. books you ordered for me arrived yet?"

I remained silent.

"My *little mother,*" said the Swami. "These books are not fit for your reading."

"How should you know that, pray?"

The master frowned. "How, at least, could you know better?"

"I have read the author: You, perhaps, have not."

"Why, then, need you read him over again?"

"When you have any need," Damini flared up, "nothing is allowed to stand in the way. It is only I who am to have no needs, I suppose?"

"You forget yourself, Damini. I am a *sannyasin,* I have no worldly desires."

"You forget that I am not a *sannyasin.* I have a desire to read these books. Will you let me have them, please?"

The Swami drew out the books from under his bolster and tossed them across to me. I handed them over to Damini.

In the result, the books that Damini would have read alone by herself, she now began to send for me to read out to her. It was in that same shaded verandah along our rooms, that these readings took place. Satish passed and re-passed, longing to join in, but could not, unasked.

One day we had come upon some humorous passage,. and Damini was rocking with laughter. There was a festival on at the temple and we had supposed that Satish would be there. But we heard a door open behind us, through which Satish unexpectedly appeared and came and sat down beside us.

Damini's laughter was at once cut short. I also felt awkward. I wanted badly to say something to Satish, but no words would come, and I went on silently turning over page after page of my book. He rose and left as abruptly as he had come. Our reading made no further progress that day.

Satish may, very likely, have understood that while he envied the absence of reserve between Damini and me, its presence was just what I envied in his case! That same day he petitioned the Master to be allowed to go off on a solitary excursion along the sea coast, promising to be back within a week. "The very thing, my son!" acquiesced the Swami, with enthusiasm,

Satish departed. Damini did not send for me to read to her any more, nor had she anything else to ask of me. Neither did I see her going to her friends, the women of the neighbourhood. She kept to her room, with closed doors.

Some days passed thus. One afternoon, when the Master was deep in his siesta, and I was writing a letter seated out on our verandah, Satish suddenly turned up. Without so much as a glance at me, he walked straight up to Damini's door, knocking as he called: "Damini, Damini."

Damini came out at once. But what a Satish met her inquiring gaze!

Like a storm-battered ship, with torn rigging and tattered sails, was his condition,- yes wild, hair dishevelled, features drawn, garments dusty.

"Damini," said Satish, "I asked you to leave us. That was wrong of me. I beg your forgiveness."

"Oh don't say that!" cried the distressed Damini, clasping her hands.

"You must forgive me," he repeated. "I will never again allow the pride to overcome me, which led me to think I could take you or leave you, according to my own spiritual requirements. Such sin will never cross my mind again, I promise you. Do you also promise me one thing."

"Command me!" said Damini, making humble obeisance.

"You must join us, and not keep aloof like this."

"I will join you," said Damini. "I will sin no more." Then, as she bowed low again to take the dust of his feet, she repeated: "I will sin no more."

5

The stone was melted again. Damini's bewildering radiance remained undimmed, but it lost its heat. In worship and ritual and service her beauty blossomed out anew. She was never absent from the kirtan singing, nor when the Master gave his readings and discourses. There was a change in her raiment also. She reverted to the golden brown of plain *tussore,* and whenever we saw her she seemed fresh from her toilet.,

The severest test came in her intercourse with the Master. When she made her salutation to him, I could catch the glint of severely repressed temper through her half-closed eyelids. I know very well that she could not bear to take orders from the Master nevertheless, so complete was her self-suppression, that the Swami was able to screw up the courage to repeat his condemnation of the obnoxious tone of that outrageously modern Bengali writer. The next day there was a heap of flowers near his seat; and under them were the torn pages of the books of the objectionable author!

I had always noticed that the fagging of Satish was specially intolerable to Damini. Even now, when the Master asked him for some personal service, Damini would try to hustle past Satish and forestall him. This, however, was not possible in every case; and while Satish kept blowing on the tinder to get it into a blaze for the Master's pipe, Damini would have much ado to keep herself in hand by grimly repeating under her breath: "I will sin no more. I will sin no more."

But what Satish had tried for did not come off. On the last occasion of Damini's self-surrender, he had seen the beauty of the surrender only, not of the self behind it. This time, Damini herself had become so true for him that she eclipsed all strains of music and all thoughts of philosophy. Her reality had become so dominant, that Satish could no longer lose himself in his visions, nor think of her merely as an aspect of Universal Woman. It was not she who, as before, set off for him the melodies which filled his mind; rather these melodies had now become part of the halo which encircled her person.

I should not, perhaps, leave out the minor detail that Damini had no longer any use for me. Her demands on me had suddenly ceased altogether. Of my colleagues who used to assist in beguiling her leisure, the kite was dead, the mongoose fled, and as for the mongrel puppy, its manners having offended the Master's susceptibilities, it had been given away. Thus, bereft both of occupation and companionship, I returned to my old place in the assembly surrounding the Master though the talking and singing and doing that went on there, had all alike become horribly distasteful to me.

6

The laboratory of Satish's mind was not amenable to any outside laws. One day, as he was concocting therein, for my special delectation, a weird mixture of ancient philosophy and modern science, with reason as well as emotion promiscuously thrown in, Damini burst in upon us panting.

"Oh, do come both of you, come quick!"

"Whatever is the matter?" I cried, as I bounded to my feet.

"Nabin's wife has taken poison, I think," she said.

Nabin was a neighbour: one of our regular *kirtan* singers; and an ardent disciple. We hurried after Damini, but when we arrived, his wife was dead.

We pieced together her story. Nabin's wife had brought her motherless younger sister to live with them. She was a very pretty girl and, when Nabin's brother had last been home, he was so taken with her that their marriage was speedily arranged. This greatly relieved her elder, sister; for, high caste as they were, a suitable bridegroom was not easy to find. The wedding day had been fixed some months later, when Nabin's brother would have completed his college course. Meanwhile Nabin's wife lit upon the discovery that her husband had seduced her sister. She forthwith insisted on his marrying the unfortunate girl-for which, as it happened, he did not require much persuasion. The wedding ceremony had just been put through, whereupon the elder sister had made away with herself by taking poison.

There was nothing to be done. The three of us slowly wended our way back, to find the usual throng round the Master. They sang *kirtan* to him and, as was his wont, he waxed ecstatic and began to dance witht them ....

That evening the moon was near its full. One corner of our terrace was over-hung by the branch of a *chalta* tree. At the edge of the shadow under its thick foliage, sat Damini lost in silent thought. Satish was softly pacing up and down our verandah, behind her. I had a mania for diarywriting, in which I was indulging, alone in my room, with the door wide open.

That evening the *koel* could not sleep, stirred by the south breeze, the leaves too were speaking out; and the moonlight, shimmering on them, smiled in response. Something must have also stirred within Satish, for he suddenly turned his steps towards his steps towards the terrace, and went and stood near Damini.

Damini looked round with a start, *adjusted her sari* over the back of her head, and rose as if to leave. Satish called: "Damini?"

She stopped at once, and turning to him appealingly, with folded hands she said: "My Master, may I ask you a question?"

Satish looked at her inquiringly, but made no reply.

Damini went on: "Tell me truly, of what use to the world is this thing with which your sect is occupied day and night. Whom have you been able to save?"

I came out from my room and stood on the verandah.

Damini continued: "This passion, passion, passion, on which you harp-did you not see it in its true colours today? It has neither religion, nor duty; it regards neither wife, nor brother, nor the sanctuary of home; it knows neither pity nor trust, nor modesty, nor shame. What way have you discovered to save men from the hell of this cruel, shameless, soulkilling passion?"

I could not contain myself, but cried out: 'Oh, yes, we have hit upon the wonderful device of banishing Woman right away from our territory, so as to make our pursuit of passion quite safe?"

Without paying any heed to my words, Damini spoke on to Satish: "I have learnt nothing at all from your Master. He has never shed a moment's peace over my distracted mind. Fire cannot quench fire. The road, along which he is taking his devotees, leads neither to courage, nor peace. The woman who is dead-her heart's blood was sucked dry by that ogress Passion, who killed her. Did you not see the hideous countenance of the murderers? For god's sake, my Mother, I implore you, do not sacrifice me to that ogress. Oh save me, for if anybody can save me, it is you!"

For a space, all three of us kept silent. So poignant became the silence all around, it seemed to me that the droning vibration of the cicadas was but a swoon-thrill of the pallid sky.

Satish was the first to speak. "Tell me," said he to Damini. "What is it you would have me do for you?"

"Be my guru! I would follow none else. Give me some creed-higher than all this-which can save me. Do not let me be destroyed, together with the Divinity which is in me."

Satish drew himself up straight, as he responded: "So be it."

Damini prostrated herself at his feet, her forehead touching the ground, and remained long thus, in reverential adoration, murmuring: "Oh my Master, my Master, save me, save me, save me from all sin."

7

Once more there was a mighty sensation in our world, and a storm of vituperation in the newspapers-for Satish had again turned renegade!

At first he had loudly proclaimed active disbelief in all religion and social convention. Next, with equal vehemence, he had displayed active belief in gods and goddesses, rites and ceremonies, not excluding the least of them. Now, lastly, he had thrown to the winds all the rubbish heaps both of religious and irreligious cults, and had retired into such simple peacefulness that no one could even guess what he believed, or what he did not. True, he took up good works as of old; but there was nothing aggressive about it, this time.

There was another event over which the newspapers exhausted all their resources of sarcasm and virulence. That was the announcement of Damini's marriage with me. The mystery of this marriage none will perhaps fathom; but why need they?

I, Srivilas

1

THERE was once an Indigo factory on this spot. All that now remains of it are some tumble-down rooms belonging to the old house, the rest having crumbled into dust. When returning homewards, after performing Damini's last rites, the place as we passed by it, somehow appealed to me, and I stayed on alone.

The road, leading from the riverside to the factory gate, is flanked by an avenue of *sisu* trees. Two broken pillars still mark the site of the gateway, and portions of the garden wall are standing here and there. The only other memento of the past is the brick-built mound over the grave of some Mussalman servant of the factory. Through its cracks, wild flowering shrubs have sprung up. Covered with blossoms, they sway to the breeze and mock at death, like merry maidens shaking with laughter while they chaff the bridegroom on his wedding day. The banks of the garden pool have caved in and let the water trickle away, leaving the bottom to serve as a bed for a coriander patch. As I sit out on the roadside, under the shade of the avenue, the scent of the coriander, in flower, goes through and through my brain.

I sit and muse. The factory, of which these remnants are left, like the skeleton of some dead animal by the wayside, was once alive. From it flowed waves of pleasure and pain in a stormy succession, which then seemed to be endless. Its terribly efficient English proprietor, who made the very blood of his sweating cultivators run blue-how tremendous was he compared to puny me! Nevertheless, Mother Earth girded up her green mantle, undismayed, and set to work so thoroughly to plaster over the disfigurement wrought by him and his activities that the few remaining traces require but a touch or two more to vanish for ever.

This scarcely novel reflection, however, was not what my mind ruminated over. 'No, no!' it protested. 'One dawn does not succeed another merely to smear fresh plaster over the floor. True, the Englishman of the factory, together with the rest of its abominations, are all swept away into oblivion like a handful of dust- but my Damini!'

Many will not agree with me, I know. Shankaracharya's philosophy spares no one. All the world is *maya.* a trembling dew drop on the lotus leaf. But Shankaracharya was a *sannyasin.* "Who is your wife, who your son?" were questions he asked, without understanding their meaning.

Not being a *sannyasin* myself, I know full well that Damini is not a vanishing dew drop on the lotus leaf.

But, I am told, there are householders also, who say the same thing. That may be. They are mere householders, who have lost only the mistress of their house. Their home is doubtless *maya*, and so likewise its mistress. These are their own handiwork, and when done with, any broom is good enough for sweeping their fragments clean away.

I did not keep house long enough to settle down as a householder, nor is mine the temperament of a *sannyasin,*- that saved me. So the Damini whom I gained became neither housewife nor *maya*. She remained true to herself and, to the end, my Damini. Who dares call her a shadow? Had I known Damini only as mistress of my house, much of this would never have been written. It is because I knew her in a greater, truer relation, that I have no hesitation in putting down the whole truth, reckoning nothing of what others may say.

Had it been my lot to live with Damini as others do in the every-day world, the household routine of toilet and food and repose would have sufficed for me as for them. And after Damini's death, I could have heaved a sigh and exclaimed with Shankaracharya: "Variegated is the world of maya!"before hastening to honour the suggestion of some aunt or other well-meaning elder, by another essay at sampling its variety. But I had not adjusted myself to the domestic world, like a foot in a comfortable old shoe. From the very outset I had given up hope of happiness,-no, no, that is saying too much; I was not so non-human as that. Happiness I certainly hoped for, but I did not arrogate to myself the right to claim it.

Why? Because it was I who persuaded Damini to give her consent to our marriage. Not for us was the first auspicious vision in the rosy glow of festive lamps, to the rapturous strains of wedding pipes. We married in the broad light of day, with eyes wide open ....

2

When we went away from Lilananda Swami, the time came to think of ways and means, as well as of a sheltering roof. We had all along been more in danger of surfeit than of starvation, with the hospitality which the devotees of the Master pressed on us, wherever we went with him. We had almost come to forget that to be a householder involves tile acquiring, or building, or at least the renting of a house; so accustomed had we become to cast the burden of its supply upon another, and to look on a house as demanding from us only the duty of making ourselves thoroughly comfortable in it.

At length we recollected that Uncle Jagamohan had bequeathed his share of the house to Satish. Had the Will been left in Satish's custody, it would by this time have been wrecked, like a paper boat, on the waves of his emotion. It happened, however, to be with me; for I was the executor. There were three conditions attached to the bequest which I was responsible for carrying out. No religious worship was to be performed in the house. The ground floor was to be used as a school for the leather dealers' children. And after Satish's death, the whole property was to be applied for the benefit of that community. Piety was the one thing Uncle Jagamohan could not tolerate. He looked on it as more defiling even than worldliness; and probably these provisions, which he facetiously referred to in English as 'sanitary precautions',

1. The wattle and daub cottages of a Bengal village are cleaned and renovated every morning by a moist clay mixture being smeared by the housewife over the plinth and floors.

were intended as a safeguard against the excessive piety which prevailed in the adjoining half of the house.

"Come along," I said to Satish. "Let's go to your Calcutta house." "I am not quite ready for that yet," Satish replied.

I did not understand this.

"There was a day," he explained, "when I relied wholly on reason only to find at last that reason could not support the whole of life's burden. There was another day-, when I placed my reliance on emotion, only to discover it to be a bottomless abyss. The reason and the emotion, yon see, were alike mine. Man cannot rely on himself alone. I dare not return to town until I have found my support."

"What then do you suggest?" I asked.

"You two go on to the Calcutta house. I would wander alone for a time. I seem to see glimpses of the shore. If I allow it out of my sight now; I may lose. it for ever."

As soon as we were by ourselves, Damini said to me: "That will never do! If he wanders about alone, who is to look after him? Don't you remember in what plight he came back, when he last went wandering? The very idea of it fills me with fear."

Shall I tell the truth? This anxiety of Damini's stung me like a hornet, leaving behind the smart of anger. Had not Satish wandered about for two whole years after Uncle's death-had that killed him? This question of mine did not remain unuttered. Rather, some of the smart of the sting got expressed With It.

"I know, Srivilas Babu," Damini repiied. "It takes a great deal to kill a man. But why should he be allowed to suffer at all, so long as the two of us are here to prevent it?"

The two of us! Half of that meant this wretched creature, Srivilas! It is, of course, a law of the world, that in order to save some people from suffering others shall suffer. All the inhabitants of the earth may be divided into two such classes. Damini had found out to which I belonged. It was a compensation, indeed, that she included herself in the same class.

I went and said to Satish: "All right, then, let us postpone our departure to town. We can stay for a time in that dilapidated house on the riverside. They say it is subject to ghostly visitations. This will serve to keep off human visitors."

"And you two?" inquired Satish.

"Like the ghosts, we shall keep in hiding as far as possible."

Satish threw a nervous glance at Damini,- there may have been a suggestion of dread in it.

Damini clasped her hands as she said imploringly: "I have accepted you as my guru. Whatever my sins may have been, let them not deprive me of the right to serve you."

3

I must confess that this frenzied pertinacity of Satish's quest is beyond my understanding. There was a time when I would have laughed to scorn the very idea. Now I had ceased to laugh. What Satish was pursuing was fire indeed, no will-o'-the-wisp. When I realized how its heat was consuming him, the old arguments of Uncle Jagmohan's school refused to pass my lips. Of what avail would it be to find with Herbert Spencer, that the mystic sense might have originated in some ghostly superstition, or that its message could be reduced to some logical absurdity? Did we not see how Satish was burning-his whole being aglow?

Satish was perhaps better off when his days were passing in one round of excitement,-singing, dancing, serving the Master-the whole of his spiritual effort exhausting itself in the output of the moment. Now that he has lapsed into outward quiet, his spirit refuses to be controlled any longer. There is now no question of seeking emotional satisfaction. The inward struggle for realization is so tremendous within him, that we are afraid to look on his face.

I could remain silent no longer. "Satish," I suggested, "don't you think it would be better to go to some guru who could show you the way and make your spiritual progress easier?"

This only served to annoy him. "Oh do be quiet, Visri," he broke out irritably, "for goodness' sake, keep quiet? What does one want to make it easier for? Delusion alone is easy. Truth is always difficult."

"But would it not be better," I tried again, "if some guru were to guide you along the path of truth?"

Satish was almost beside himself. "Will you never understand," he groaned, "that I am not running after any geographical truth? The Dweller within can only come to me along my own true path. The path of the guru can only lead to the guru's door."

What a number of opposite principles have I heard enunciated by this same mouth of Satish. I, Srivilas, once the favourite disciple of Uncle Jagmohan,- who would have threatened me with a big stick if I had called him Master-I had actually been made by Satish to massage the legs of Lilananda Swami. And now not even a week has passed, but he needs must preach to me in this strain! However, as I dared not smile, I maintained a solemn silence.

"I have now understood," Satish went on, "why our scriptures say that it is better to die in one's own *dharma* rather than court the terrible fate of taking the *dharma* of another. All else may be accepted as gifts, but if one's *dharma* is not one's own, it does not save, but kills. I cannot gain my God as alms from anybody else. If I get Him at all, it shall be I who win Him. If I do not, even death is better."

I am argumentative by nature and could not give in so easily. "A poet," said I, "may get a poem from within himself.

But he who is not a poet needs must take it from another."

"I am a poet," said Satish, without blenching. That finished the matter. I came away.

Satish had no regular hours for meals or sleep. There was not knowing where he was to be found next. His body began to take on the unsubstantial keenness of an over-sharpened knife. One felt this could not go on much longer. Yet I could not muster up courage to interfere. Damini, however, was utterly unable to bear it. She was grievously incensed at God's ways. With those who ignored Him, God was powerless- was it fair thus to take it out of one who was helplessly prostrate at His feet? When Damini used to wax wroth with Lilananda Swami, she knew how to bring it home to him. Alas, she knew not how to bring her feelings home to God!

Anyhow, she spared no pains in trying to get Satish to be regular in satisfying his physical needs. Numberless and ingenious were her contrivances to get this misfit creature to conform to domestic regulations. For a considerable space, Satish made no overt objection to her endeavours. But one morning he waded across the shallow river to the broad sandbed along the opposite bank, and there disappeared from sight.

The sun rose to the meridian: it gradually bent over to the west; but there was no sign of Satish. Damini waited for him, fasting, till she could contain herself no longer. She put some food on a tray, and with it toiled through the knee-deep water till she found herself on the sandbank.

It was a vast expanse on which not a living creature of any kind was to be seen. The sun was cruel. Still more so were the glowing billows of sand, one succeeding the other, like ranks of crouching sentinels guarding the emptiness. As she stood on the edge of this spreading pallor, where all limits seemed to have been lost, where no call could meet with any response, no question with any answer, Damini's heart sank within her. It was as if her world had been wiped away and reduced to the dull blank of original colourlessness. One vast 'No' seemed to be stretched at her feet. No sound, no movement, no red of blood, no green of vegetation, no blue of sky, but only the drab of sand. It looked like the lipless grin of some giant skull, the tongueless cavern of its jaws gaping with an eternal petition of thirst to the unrelenting fiery skies above.

While she was wondering in what direction to proceed, the faint track of footsteps caught Damini's eye. These she pursued and went on and on, over the undulating surface, till they stopped at a pool on the further side of a sand-drift. Along the moist edge of the water could be seen the delicate tracery of the claw marks of innumerable water-fowl. Under the shade of the sand-rift sat Satish.

The water was the deepest of deep blue. The fussy snipets were poking about on its margin, bobbing their tails and fluttering their black and white wings. At some distance were a flock of wild duck quacking vigorously .and seeming never to get the preening of their feathers done to their own satisfaction. When Damini reached the top of the mound which formed one bank of the pool, the ducks took themselves off in a body, with a great clamour and beating of wings.

Satish looked round and saw Damini. " Why are you here?" he cried.

"I have brought you something to eat," said Damini.

"I want nothing," said Satish.

"It is very late-" ventured Damini.

"Nothing at all," repeated Satish.

"Let me then wait a little," suggested Damini. "Pershaps later on-?"

"Oh, why will you-" burst out Satish, but as his glance fell on Damini's face, he stopped short.

Damini said nothing further. Tray in hand she retraced her -steps through the sand, which glared round her like the eye of a tiger in the dark.

Tears had always been rarer in Damini's eyes than lightning flashes. But when I saw her that evening- seated on the floor, her feet stretched out before her- she was weeping. When she saw me, her tears seemed to burst through some obstruction and showered forth in torrents. I cannot tell what it felt like within my breast. I came near and sat down on one side.

When she had calmed herself a little I inquired:

"Why does Satish's health make you so anxious?"

"What else have I to be anxious about?" she asked simply. "All the rest he has to think out for himself. There I can neither understand nor help."

"But consider, Damini," I said. "When man's mind puts forth all its energy into one particular channel, his bodily needs become reduced correspondingly. That is why, in the presence of great joy or great sorrow, man does not hunger or thirst. Satish's state of mind is now such, that it will do him no harm even if you do not look after his body."

"I am a woman," replied Damini. "The building up of the body with our own body, with our life itself, is our *dharma.* It is woman's own creation. So when we women see the body suffer, our spirit refuses to be comforted."

"That is why," I retorted, "Those who are busy with things of the spirit seem to have no eyes for you, the guardians of mere bodies!"

"Haven't they!" Damini flared up. "So wonderful, rather, is the vision of their eyes, it turns everything topsy-turvy."

'Ah woman,' said I to myself. That is what fascinates you. Srivilas, my boy, next time you take birth, take good care to be born in the world of, topsyturvydom.'

4

The wound which Satish inflicted on Damini, that day on the sands, had this result that he could not remove from his mind the agony he had seen in her eyes. During the succeeding days he had to go through the purgatory of showing her special consideration. It was long since he had freely conversed with us. Now he would send for Damini and talk to her. The experiences and struggles through which he was passing were the subject of these talks.

Damini had never been so exercised by his indifference as she now was by his solicitude. She felt sure this could not last, because the cost was too much to pay. Some day or other, Satish's attention would be drawn to the state of the account, and he would discover how high the price was then would come the crash. The more regular Satish became in his meals and rest, as a good householder should, the more anxious became Damini, the more she felt ashamed of herself. It was almost as if she would be relieved to find Satish becoming rebellious. She seemed to be saying: 'You were quite right to hold aloof. Your concern for me is only punishing yourself. That I cannot bear!-I must,' she appeared to conclude, make friends with the neighbours again, and see if I cannot contrive to keep away from the house.'

One night we were roused by a sudden shout: "Srivilas! Damini!" It must have been past midnight, but Satish could not have taken count of the hour. How he passed his nights we knew not, but the way he went on seemed to have cowed the very ghosts into flight.

We shook off our slumbers, and came out of our respective rooms to find Satish on the flagged pavement in front of the house, standing alone in the darkness. "I have understood!" he exclaimed as he saw us. "I have no more doubts."

Damini softly went up and sat down on the pavement. Satish absently followed her example and sat down too. I also followed suit.

"If I keep going," said Satish, "in the same direction along which He comes to me, then I shall only be going further and further away from Him. If I proceed in the opposite direction, then only can we meet."

I silently gazed at his flaming eyes. As a geometrical truth what he said was right enough. But what in the world was it all about?

"He loves form," Satish went on, "so He is continually descending towards form. We cannot live by form alone, so we must move on towards His formlessness. He is free, so His play is within bonds. We are bound, so we find our joy in freedom. All our sorrow is because we cannot understand this."

We kept as silent as the stars.

"Do you not understand, Damini?" pursued Satish. "He who sings proceeds from his joy to the tune; he who hears, from the tune to joy. One comes from freedom into bondage, the other goes from bondage into freedom; only thus can they have their communion. He sings and we hear. He ties the bonds as He sings to us, we untie them as we hear Him."

I cannot say whether Damini understood Satish's words, but she understood Satish. With her hands folded on her lap she kept quite still.

"I was hearing His song through the night," Satish went on, "till in a flash the whole thing became clear to me. Then I could not keep it to myself, and called out to you. All this time I had been trying to. fashion Him to suit myself, and so was deprived.-O Desolator! Breaker of ties! Let me be shattered to pieces within you, again and again, for ever and ever. Bonds are not for me, that is why I can hold on to no bond for long. Bonds are yours, and so are you kept eternally bound to creation. Play on, then, with our forms and let me take my plunge into your formlessness.-O Eternal, you are mine, mine, mine." With this cry Satish departed into the night towards the river.

After that night, Satish lapsed back into his old ways, forgetful of all claims of rest or nourishment. As to when his mind would rise into the light of ecstasy, or lapse into the depths of gloom, we could make no guess. May God help her, who has taken on herself the burden of keeping such a creature within the wholesomeness of worldly habit...

5

It had been stiflingly oppressive the whole day. In the night a great storm burst on us. We had our several rooms along a verandah, in which a light used to be kept burning all night. That was now blown out. The river was lashed into foaming waves, and a flood of rain burst forth from the clouds. The splashing of the waves down below and the dashing of the torrents from above played the cymbals in this chaotic revel of the gods. Nothing could be seen of the deafening movements which resounded within the depths of the darkness, and made the sky, like a blind child, break into shivers of fright. Out of the bamboo thickets pierced a scream as of some bereaved giantess. From the mango groves burst the cracking and crashing of breaking timber. The riverside echoed with the deep thuds of the falling masses of the crumbling banks. Through the bare ribs of our dilapidated house the keen blasts howled and howled like infuriated beasts.

On such a night the fastenings of the human mind are shaken loose. The storm gains entry and plays havoc within, scattering into disorder its well-arranged furniture of convention, tossing about its curtains of decorous restraint in disturbing revealment. I could not sleep. But what can I write of the thoughts which assailed my sleepless brain? They do not concern this story.

"Who is that?" I heard Satish cry out all of a sudden in the darkness.

"It is I-Damini," came the reply. "Your windows are open and the rain is streaming in. I have come to close them".

As she was doing this she found Satish had got out of his bed. He seemed to stand and hesitate, just for a moment, and then he went out of the room.

Damini went back to her own room and sat long on the threshold. No one returned. The fury of the wind went on increasing in violence.

Damini could sit quiet no longer. She also left the house. It was hardly possible to keep on one's feet in the storm. The sentinels of the revelling gods seemed to be scolding Damini and repeatedly thrusting her back. The rain made desperate attempts to pervade every nook and cranny of the sky.-If only Damini could give outlet to her agony in just such a world-drowning flood?

A flash rent the sky from end to end with terrific tearing thunder. It revealed Satish standing on the river brink. With a supreme effort Damini reached him in one tempestuous rush outvying the wind. She fell prone at his feet. The shriek of the storm was overcome by her cry: "At your feet I swear I had no thought of sin against your God! Why punish me thus?"

Satish stood silent.

"Thrust me into the river with your feet, if you would be rid of me. But return you must!"

Satish came back. As he re-entered the house he said: "My need for Him whom I seek is immense, so .absolutely, that I have no need for anything else at all. Damini, have pity on me and leave me to Him."

After a space of silence Damini said: "I will."

6

I knew nothing of this at the time, but heard it all from Damini, afterwards. So when I saw through my open door, the two returning figures pass along the verandah to their rooms, the desolation of my lot fell heavy on my heart and took me by the throat. I struggled up from my bed. Further sleep was impossible that night.

The net morning, what a Damini was this who met my gaze? The demon dance of last night's storm seemed to have left all its ravages on this one forlorn girl. Though I knew nothing of what had happened, I felt bitterly angry with Satish.

"Srivila Babu," said Damini. Will you take me on to Calcutta?"

I could guess all that these words meant for her, so I asked no questions. But, in the midst of the torture within me, I felt the balm of consolation. It was well that Damini should take herself away from here. Repeated buffetting against the rock could only end in the -vessel being broken up.

At parting, Damini made her obeisance to Satish, saying: "I have grievously sinned at your feet. May I hope for pardon?"

Satish with his eyes fixed on the ground replied: "I also have sinned. Let me first purge my sin away and then will I claim forgiveness."

It became clear to me, on our way to Calcutta, what a devastating fire had all along been. raging within Damini. I was so scorched by its heat that I could not restrain myself from breaking out in revilement of Satish. Damini stopped me frenziedly. "Don't you dare talk so in my presence!" she exclaimed. "Little do you know of what he saved me from! You can only see my sorrow. Had you no eyes for the sorrow he has been through in order to save me? The hideous thing tried to destroy the Beautiful and got well kicked for its pains-Serve it right!-Serve it right! " Damini began to beat her breast violently with her clenched hands. I had to hold them back by main force.

When we arrived in the evening, I left Damini at her aunt's and went over to a lodging house, where I used to be well known. My old acquaintances started at the sight of me. "Have you been ill?" they cried.

By next morning's post I got a letter from Damini. "Take me away," she wrote. "There is no room for me here."

It appeared that her aunt would not have her. Scandal about us was all over the town. The Puja numbers of the weekly newspapers had come out shortly after we had given up Lilananda Swami. The instruments for our execution had been kept sharpened. The carnage turned out to be worthy of the occasion. In our *shastras* the sacrifice of she-animals is prohibited. But, in the case of modern human sacrifice, a woman victim seems to add to the zest of the performers. The mention of Damini's name was skilfully avoided. But no less was the skill which did away with all doubt as to the intention. Anyhow, it had resulted in this shrinkage of room in the house of Damini's distant aunt.

Damini had lost her parents. But I had an idea, that one of her brothers was living. I asked Damini for his address, but she shook her head saying they were too poor. The fact was, Damini did not care to place her brother in an awkward position. What if he also came to say there was no room?

"Where will you stay, then?" I had to inquire.

"I will go back to Lilananda Swami."

I could not trust myself to speak for a time,-I was so overcome. Was this, then, the last cruel trick which Fate had held in reserve?

"Will the Swami take you back?" I asked at length.

"Gladly!"

Damini understood men. Sect-mongers rejoice more in catching adherents, than in gaining truths. Damini was quite right. There would be no dearth of room for her at Lilananda's, but-

"Damini," I said, just at this juncture. "There is another way. If you promise not to be angry, I will mention it."

"Tell me," said Damini.

"If it is at all possible for you to think of marrying a creature, such as I am-"

"What are you -saying, Srivila Babu?" interrupted Damini. "Are you mad?"

"Suppose I am," said I. "One can sometimes solve insoluble problems by becoming mad. Madness is like the wishing carpet of the Arabian Nights. It can waft one over the thousand petty considerations which obstruct the everyday world."

"What do you call petty considerations?"

"Such as: What will people think?-What will happen in the future?-and so on, and so forth."

"And what about the vital considerations?"

"What do you call vital?" I asked in my turn.

"Such as, for instance: What will be your fate, if you marry a creature like me?" said Damini.

"If that be a vital consideration, I am reassured. For I cannot possibly be in a worse plight than now. Any movement of my prostrate destiny, even though it be a turning over to the other side, cannot but be a sign of improvement."

Of course I could not believe that some telepathic news of my state of mind had never reached Damini. Such news, however, had not, so far, come under the head of 'Important'-at least it had not called for any notice to be taken. Now action was definitely demanded of her.

Damini was lost in silent thought.

"Damini," I said. "I am only one of the very ordinary sort of men,-even less, for I am of no account in the world. To marry me, or not to marry me, cannot make enough difference to be worth all this thought."

Tears glistened in Damini's eyes. "Had you been an ordinary man, it would not have cost me a moment's hesitation," she said.

After another long silence, Damini murmured: "You know what I am."

"You also know what I am," I rejoined.

Thus was the proposal mooted, relying more on things unspoken than on what was said.

7

Those who, in the old days, had been under the spell of my English speeches had mostly shaken off their fascination during my absence; except only Naren, who still looked on me as one of the rarest products of the age. A house belonging to him was temporarily vacant. In this we took shelter.

It seemed at first that my proposal would never be rescued from the ditch of silence, into which it had lumbered at the very start; or, at all events, that it would require any amount of discussion and repair work, before it could be hauled back on the high road of 'yes' or 'no'.

But man's mind was evidently created to raise a laugh against mental science, with its sudden practical jokes. In the spring, which now came -upon us, the Creator's joyous laughter rang through and through this hired dwelling of ours.

All this while, Damini never had the time to notice that I was anybody at all, or it may be that the dazzling light from a different quarter had kept her blinded. Now that her world had shrunk around her, it was reduced to me alone. So she had no help but to look on me with seeing eyes. Perhaps it was the kindness of my fate, which contrived that this should be her first sight of me.

By river and hill and sea-shore have I wandered along with Damini, as one of Lilananda's *kirtan* party, setting the atmosphere on fire with passionate song, to the beat of drum and cymbal. Great sparks of emotion were set free as we rang the changes on the text of the Vaishnava poet:

The noose of love hath bound my heart to thy feet.

Yet the curtain which hid me from Damini was not burnt away.

But what was it that happened in this Calcutta lane? The dingy houses, crowding upon one another, blossomed out like flowers of paradise. Verily God vouchsafed to us a miracle. Out of this brick and mortar, He fashioned a harp string to voice forth His melody. And with His wand He touched me, the least of men, and made me, all in a moment, wonderful.

When the curtain is there, the separation is infinite; when it is lifted, the distance can be crossed in the twinkling of an eye. So it took no time at all. "I was in a dream," said Damini; "it wanted this shock to wake me. Between that 'you' of mine and this 'you' of mine, there was a veil of stupor. I salute my master again and again, for it is he who dispelled it."

"Damini," I said, "do not keep your gaze on me like that. Before, when you made the discovery that this creation of God is not beautiful, I was able to bear it; but it will be difficult to do so now."

"I am making the discovery," she replied, "that this creation of God has its beauty."

"Your name will go down in history!" I exclaimed. "The planting of the explorer's flag on the South Pole heights was child's play to this discovery of yours. 'Difficult' is not the word for it. You will have achieved the impossible!"

I had never realized before how short our spring month of Phalgun is. It has only thirty days, and each of the days is not a minute more than twenty-four hours. With the infinite time, which God has at his disposal, such parsimony I failed to understand!

"This mad freak that you are bent on,-" said Damini, "what will your people have to say to it?"

"My people are my best friends. So they are sure to turn me out of their house." "What next?"

"Next it will be for you and me to build up a home, fresh from the very foundations. That will be our own special creation."

"You must also fashion afresh the mistress of your house, from the very beginning. May she also be your creation, with no trace left of her ofd battered condition!"

We fixed a day in the following month for the wedding. Damini insisted that Satish should be brought over.

"What for?" I asked. "He must give me away."

Where the madcap was wandering I was not sure. I had written several letters, but with no reply. He could hardly have given up that old haunted house, otherwise my letters would have been returned as undelivered. The chances were, that he had not the time to be opening and reading letters.

"Damini," said I, "you must come with me and invite him personally. This is not a case for sending a formal invitation letter. I could have gone by myself, but my courage is not equal to it. For all we know, he may be on the other side of the river, superintending the preening of the ducks' feathers. To follow him there is a desperate venture of which you alone are capable!"

Damini smiled. "Did I not swear I would never pursue him there again?"

"You swore you would not go to him with food any more. That does not cover your going over to invite him to a repast!"

8

This time everything passed off smoothly. We each took Satish by one hand, and brought him along with us, back to Calcutta. He was as pleased as a child receiving a pair of new dolls!

Our idea had been to have a quiet wedding. But Satish would have none of that. Moreover, there were the Mussalman friends of Uncle Jagmohan. When they heard the news, they were so extravagantly jubilant-the neighbours must have thought it was for the Amir of Kabul, or the Nizam of Hyderabad, at the very least. But the height of revelry was reached by the newspapers in a very orgy of calumny. Our hearts, however, were too full to harbour any resentment. We were quite willing to allow the bloodthirstiness of the readers to be satisfied, and the pockets of the proprietors to be filled—along with our blessings to boot.

"Come and occupy my house, Visri, old fellow," said Satish.

"Come with us, too," I added. "Let us set to work together, over again."

"No, thank you," said Satish: "My work is elsewhere." .

"You won't be allowed to go, till you have assisted at our house- insisted Damini.

This function was not going to be a crowded affair, Satish being the only guest. But it was all very well for him to say: 'Come and occupy my house.' That had already been done by his father, Harimohan-not directly, but through a tenant. Harimohan would have entered into possession himself; but his worldly and other-worldly advisers warned him, that it was best not to risk it-a Mussalman having died there of the plague. Of course the tenant, to whom it was offered, ran the same spiritual and physical risks, but then why need he be told?

How we got the house out of Harimohan's clutches is a long story. The Mussalman leather-dealers were our chief allies. When they got to know of the contents of the Will, we found further legal steps to be superfluous!

The allowance, which I had all along been getting from home, was now stopped. It was all the more of a joy to us to undertake together the toil of setting up house without outside assistance. With the seal of *Premchand-Roychand,* it was not difficult for me to secure a professorship. I was able to supplement my income by publishing notes on the prescribed textbooks, which were eagerly availed of as patent nostrums for passing examinations. I need not have done so much, for our own wants were few. But Damini insisted that Satish should not have to worry about his own living while we were here to prevent it.

There was another thing, about which Damini did not say a word, and which, therefore, I had to attend to secretly. That was the education of her brother's son and the marriage of his daughter,-both matters beyond the means of her brother himself. His house was barred to us; but pecuniary assistance has no caste to static! in the way of its acceptance. moreover, acceptance did not necessarily involve acknowledgement. So I had to add the sub-editorship of a newspaper to my other occupations.

Without consulting Damini, I engaged a cook and two servants. Without consulting me, Damini sent them packing the very next day. When I objected, she made me conscious how ill-judged was my attempted consideration for her. "If I am not allowed," she said, "to do my share of work, while you are slaving away, where am I to hide my shame?"

My work outside and Damini's work at home flowed on together like the confluent Ganga and Jamuna. Damini also began to teach sewing to the leather-dealers' little girls. She was determined not to take defeat at my hands. I am not enough of a poet to sing how this Calcutta house of ours became *Brindaban* itself, our labours the flute strains which kept it enraptured. All I can say is, that our days did not drag, neither did they merely pass by-they positively danced along.

1. February-March

One more springtime came and went; but never another.

Ever since her return front the cave temple, Damini had suffered from a pain in her breast, of which, however, she then told no one. This suddenly took a turn for the worse, and when I asked her about it she said: "This is my secret wealth, my touchstone. With it, as dower, I was able to come to you. Else, I would not have been worthy."

The doctors, each of them, had a different name for the malady. Neither did they agree in their prescriptions. When my little hoard of gold was blown away between the cross fire of the doctors' fees and the chemists' bills, the chapter of medicament came to an end, and change of air was advised. As a matter of fact, nothing else of changeable value was left to us except air.

"Take me to the place from which I brought the pain," said Damini. "It has no dearth of air."

When the month of *Magh* ended with its full moon, and *Phalgun* began, while the sea heaved and sobbed with the wail of its lonely eternity, Damini, taking the dust of my feet, bade farewell to me with the words:

"I have not had enough of you. May you be mine again in our next birth."

8

Crossing

8

Crossing

THE scouts of a distant storm have pitched their cloud-tents in the sky; the light has paled; the air is damp with tears in the voiceless shadows of the forest.

The peace of sadness is in my heart like the brooding silence upon the master's lute before the music begins.

My world is still with the expectation of the great pain of thy coming into my life

6

THOU hast done well, my lover, thou hast done well to send me thy fire of pain.

For my incense never yields its perfume till it burns, and my lamp is blind till it is lighted.

When my mind is numb its torpor must be stricken by thy love's lightning; and the very darkness that blots my world burns like a torch when set afire by thy thunder.

7

DELIVER me from my own shadows, my lord, from the wrecks and confusion of my days.
For the night is dark and thy pilgrim is blinded,
Hold thou my hand.
Deliver me from despair.
Touch with thy flame the lightless lamp of my sorrow.
Waken my tired strength from its sleep.
Do not let me linger behind counting my losses.
Let the road sing to me of the house at every step.
For the night is dark, and thy pilgrim is blinded.
Hold thou my hand.

8

THE lantern which I carry in my hand makes enemy of the darkness of the farther road.

And this wayside becomes a terror to me, where even the flowering tree frowns like a spectre of scowling menace; and the sound of my own steps comes back to me in the echo of muffled suspicion.

Therefore I pray for thy own morning light, when the far and the near will kiss each other and death and life will be one in love.

9

WHEN thou savest me the steps are lighter in the march of thy worlds.

When stains are washed away from my heart it brightens the light of thy Sun.

That the bud has not blossomed in beauty in my life spreads sadness in the heart of creation.

When the shroud of darkness will be lifted from my soul it will bring music to thy smile.

10

THOU hast given me thy love, filling the world with thy gifts.

They are showered upon me when I do not know them, for my heart is asleep and dark is the night.

Yet though lost in the cavern of my dreams I have been thrilled with fitful gladness;

And I know that in return for the treasure of thy great worlds thou wilt receive from me one little flower of love in the morning when my heart awakes.

11

MY eyes have lost their sleep in watching; yet if I do not meet thee still it is sweet to watch.

My heart sits in the shadow of the rains waiting for thy love; if she is deprived still it is sweet to hope.

They walk away in their different paths leaving.me behind; if I am alone still it is sweet to listen for thy footsteps.

The wistful face of the earth weaving its autumn mists wakens longing in my heart; if it is in vain still it is sweet to feel the pain of longing.

12

HOLD thy faith firm, my heart, the day will dawn.

The seed of promise is deep in the soil, it will sprout.

Sleep, like a bud, will open its heart to the light, and the silence will find its voice.

The day is near when thy burden will become thy gift, and thy sufferings will light up thy path.

13

THE wedding hour is in the twilight, when the birds have sung their last and the winds are at rest on the waters, when the sunset spreads the carpet in the bridal chamber and the lamp is made ready to burn through the night.

Behind the silent dark walks the Unseen Comer and my heart trembles.

All songs are hushed, for the service will be read under the evening star.

14

IN the night when noise is tired the murmur of the sea fills the air.

The vagrant desires of the day come back to their rest round the lighted lamp.

Love's play is stilled into worship, life's stream touches the deep, and the world of forms comes to its nest in the beauty beyond all forms.

15

WHO is awake all alone in this sleeping earth, in the air drowsing among the moveless leaves[7] awake in the silent birds' nests, in the secret centres of the flower buds[7] awake in the throbbing stars of the night, in the depth of the pain of my being?

16

YOU came to my door in the dawn and sang; it angered me to be awakened from sleep, and you went away unheeded.

You came in the noon and asked for water; it vexed me in my work, and you were sent away with reproaches.

You came in the evening with your flaming torches.

You seemed to me like a terror and I shut my door.

Now in the midnight I sit alone in my lampless room and call you back whom I turned away in insult.

17

PICK up this life of mine from the dust. Keep it under your eyes, in the palm of your right hand.

Hold it up in the light, hide it under the shadow of death; keep it in the casket of the night with your stars, and then in the morning let it find itself among flowers that blossom in worship.

18

I KNOW that this life, missing its ripeness in love, is not altogether lost.

I know that this flowers that fade in the dawn, the streams that strayed in the desert, are not altogether lost.

I know that whatever lags behind in this life laden with slowness is not altogether lost.

I know that my dreams that are still unfulfilled, and my melodies still unstruck, are clinging to some lutestrings of thine, and they are not altogether lost.

19

You came to me in the wayward hours of spring with flute songs and flowers.

You troubled my heart from ripples into waves, rocking the red lotus of love.

You asked me to come out with you into the secret of life.

But I fell asleep among the murmurous leaves of May.

When I woke the cloud gathered in the sky and the dead leaves flitted in the wind.

Through the patter of rain I hear your nearing footsteps and the cry to come out with you into the secret of death.

I walk to your side and put my hand into yours, while your eyes burn and water drips from your hair.

20

THE day is dim with rain.

Angry lightnings glance through the tattered cloud-veils. And the forest is like a caged lion shaking its mane in despair.

On such a day amidst the winds beating their wings, let me find my peace in thy presence,

For the sorrowing sky has shadowed my solitude, 'o deepen the meaning of thy touch about my heart.

21

ON that night when the storm broke open my door.

I did not know that you entered my room through the ruins,

For the lamp was blown out, and it became dark;

I stretched my arms to the sky in search of help.

I lay on the dust waiting in the tumultuous dark and I knew not that storm was your own banner.

When the morning came I saw you standing upon the emptiness that was spread over my house.

22

IS IT the Destroyer who comes?

For the boisterous sea of tears heaves in the flood-tide of pain.

The crimson clouds run wild in the wind lashed by lightning, and the thundering laughter of the Mad is over the sky.

Life sits in the chariot crowned by Death.

Bring out your tribute to him of all that you have.

Do not hug your savings to your heart, do not look behind,

Bend your head at his feet, trailing your hair in the dust.

Take to the road from this moment.

For the lamp is blown out and the house is desolate.

The storm winds scream through your doors, the walls are rocking, and the call comes from the land of dimness beyond your ken.

Hide not your face in terror; tears are in vain; your door chains have snapped.

Run out for your voyage to the end of all joys and sorrows.

Let your steps be the steps of a desperate dance.

Sing 'Victory to Life in Death.'

Accept your destiny, O Bride!

Put on your red robe to follow through the darkness the torchlight of the Bridegroom!

23

I CAME nearest to you, though I did not know it,- when I came to hurt you.

I owned you at last as my master when I fought against you to be defeated. I merely made my debt to you burdensome when I robbed you in secret. I struggled in my pride against your current only to feel all your force in my breast.

Rebelliously I put out the light in my house and your sky surprised me with its stars.

24

HAVE you come to me as my sorrow? All the more I must cling to you.

Your face is veiled in the dark, all the more I must see you.

At the blow of death from your hand let my life leap up in a flame.

Tears flow from my eyes,- let them flow round your feet in worship.

And let the pain in my breast speak to me that you are still mine.

25

I HID myself to evade you.

Now that I am caught at last, strike me, see if I flinch. Finish the game for good.

If you win in the end, strip me of all that I have.

I have had my laughter and songs in wayside booths and stately halls,- now that you have come into my life, make me weep, see if you can break my heart.

26

WHEN I awake in thy love my night of ease will be ended.

Thy sunrise will touch my heart with its touch-stone of fire, and my voyage will begin in its orbit of triumphant suffering.

I shall dare to take up death's challenge and carry thy voice in the heart of mockery and menace. I shall bare my breast against the wrongs hurled at thy children, and take the risk of standing by thy side where none but thee remains.

27

I AM the weary earth of summer bare of life and parched.

I wait for thy shower to come down in the night when I open my breast and receive it in silence.

I long to give thee in return my songs and flowers.

But empty is my store, and only the deep sigh rises from my heart through the withered grass.

But I know that thou wilt wait for the morning when my hours will brim with their riches.

28

COME to me like summer cloud, spreading thy showers from sky to sky.

Deepen the purple of the hills with thy majestic shadows, quicken the languid forests into flowers, and awaken in the hill-streams the fervour of the far-away quest.

Come to me like summer cloud, stirring my heart with the promise of hidden life, and the gladness of the green.

29

I HAVE met thee where the night touches the edge of the day; where the light startles the darkness into dawn, and the waves carry the kiss of the one shore to the other.

From the heart of the fathomless blue comes one golden call, and across the dusk of tears I try to gaze at thy,face and know not for certain if thou art seen.

30

IF LOVE be denied me then why does the morning break its heart in songs, and why are these whispers that the south wind scatters among the newborn leaves?

If love be denied me then why does the midnight bear in yearning silence the pain of the stars?

And why does this foolish heart recklessly launch its hope on the sea whose end it does not know?

31

ONLY A portion of my gift is in this world, the rest of it is in my dreams.

You, who ever elude my touch, come there in secret silence, hiding your lamp.

I shall know you by the thrill in the darkness, by the whisper of the unseen worlds, by the breath of the unknown shore;-

I shall know you by the sudden delight of my heart melting into sadness of tears.

32

I KNOW you will win my heart some day, my lover.

Through your stars you gale deep into my dreams;

You send your secrets in your moonbeams to me, and I muse and my eyes dim with tears.

Your wooing is in the sunny sky thrilling in the tremulous leaves, in the idle hours overflowing with shepherds' piping, in the rain-dimmed dusk when the heart aches with its loneliness.

33

SOME one has secretly left in my hand a flower of love.

Someone has stolen my heart and scattered it abroad in the sky.

I know not if I have found him or I am seeking him everywhere, if it is a pang of bliss or of pain.

34

THE rains sweep the sky from end to end. In the wild wet wind the jasmines revel in their own perfume.

There is a secret joy in the bosom of the night, it is the joy of the veiled sky in its hidden stars, the joy of the midnight forest in its hoarded bird-songs.

Let me fill my heart with it and carry it in secret through the day.

35

WHEN I travelled in the day I felt secure, and I did not heed the wonder of thy road, for I was proud of my speed; thy own light stood between me and thy presence.

Now it is night, and I feel thy road at every step in the dark and the scent of flowers filling the silence- like mother's whisper to the child when the light is out.

I hold tight thy hand and thy touch is with me in my loneliness.

36

SAILING through the night I came to life's feast, and the morning's golden goblet was filled with light for me.

I sang in joy,

I knew not who was the giver,

And I forgot to ask his name.

In the midday the dust grew hot under my feet and the sun overhead.

Overcome by thirst I reached the well. Water was poured to me.

I drank it.

And while I loved the ruby cup that was sweet as a kiss,

I did not see him who held it and forgot to ask his name.

In the weary evening I seek my way home.

My guide comes with a lamp and beckons me.

I ask his name,

But I only see his light through the silence and feel his smile filling the darkness.

37

Do-not leave me and go, for- it is night.

The road through the wilderness is lonely and dark and lost in tangles:

The tired earth lies still, like one blind and without a staff.

I seem to have waited for this moment for ages to light my lamp and cull my flowers.

I have reached the brink of the shoreless sea to take my plunge and lose myself for ever.

38

I DID not know that I had thy touch before it was dawn.

The news has slowly reached me through my sleep, and I open my eyes with its surprise of tears.

The sky seems full of whispers for me and my limbs are bathed with songs.

My heart bends in worship like a dew-laden flower, and I feel the flood of my life rushing to the endless.

39

No guest had come to my house for long, my doors were locked, my windows barred; I thought my night would be lonely.

When I opened my eyes I found the darkness had vanished.

I rose up and ran and saw the bolts of my gates all broken, and through the open door your wind and light waved their banner.

When I was a prisoner in my own house, and the doors were shut, my heart ever planned to escape and to wander.

Now at my broken gate, I sit still and wait for your coming,

You keep me bound by my freedom.

40

PUT out the lamps, my heart, the lamps of your lonely night.

The call comes to you to open your doors, for the morning light is abroad.

Leave your lute in the corner, my heart, the lute of your lonely life.

The call comes to you to come out in silence, for the morning sings your own songs.

41

THY gift of the earliest flower came to me this morning, and came the faint tuning of thy light.

I am a bee that has wallowed in the heart of thy golden dawn,

My wings are radiant with its pollen.

I have found my place in the feast of songs in thy April, and I am freed of my fetters like the morning of its mist in a mere play.

42

FREE me as free are the birds of the wilds, the wanderers of unseen paths.

Free me as free are the deluge of rain, and as the storm that shakes its locks and rushes on to its unknown end.

Free me as free is the forest fire, as is the thunder that laughs aloud and hurls defiance to darkness.

43

WHEN you called me I was asleep under the shadows of my walls and I did not hear you

Then you struck me with your own hands and wakened me in tears.

I started up to see that the sun had risen, that the floodtide had brought the call of the deep, and my boat was ready rocking on the dancing water.

44

REJOICE!

For Night's fetters have broken, the dreams have vanished.

Thy word has rent its veils, the buds of morning are opened; awake, O sleeper!

Light's greetings spread from the East to the West,

And at the ramparts of the ruined prison rise the paeans of Victory!

45

IN THIS moment I see you seated upon the morning's golden carpet.

The sun shines in your crown, the stars drop at your feet, the crowds come and bow to you and go, and the poet sits speechless in the corner.

46

MY guest has come to my door in this autumn morning.

Sing, my heart, sing thy welcome!

Make thy song the song of the sunlit blue, of the dew-damp air, of the lavish gold of harvest fields, of the laughter of the loud water.

Or stand mute before him for a while gazing at his face;

Then leave thy house and go out with him in silence.

47

I LIVED on the shady side of the road and watched my neighbours' gardens across the way revelling in the sunshine.

I felt I was poor, and from door to door went with my hunger.

The more they gave me from their careless abundance the more I became aware of my beggar's bowl.

Till one morning I awoke from my sleep at the sudden opening of my door, and you came and asked for alms.

In despair I broke the lid of my chest open and was startled into finding my own wealth.

48

THOU hast taken him to thine arms and crowned him with death, him who ever waited outside like a beggar at life's feast.

Thou hast put thy right hand on his failures and kissed him with peace that stills life's turbulent thirst.

Thou hast made him one with all kings and with the ancient world of wisdom.

49

IN the world's dusty road I lost my heart, but you picked it up in your hand.

I gleaned sorrow while seeking for joy, but the sorrow which you sent to me has turned to joy in my life.

My desires were scattered in pieces, you gathered them and strung them in your love.

And while I wandered from door to door, every step led me to your gate.

50

I WAS with the crowd when I was in the road;

Where the road ends I find myself alone with you.

I knew not when my day dimmed into dusk and my companions left me.

I knew not when your doors opened and I .stood surprised at my own heart's music.

But are there still traces of tears in my eyes though the bed is made, the lamp is lit, and we are alone, you and I?

51

WHEN they came and clamoured and surrounded me they hid thee from my sight.

I thought I would bring to thee my gifts last of all.

Now that the day has waned, and they have taken their dues and left me alone,

I see thee standing at the door.

But I find I have no gift remaining to give, and I hold both my hands up to thee.

52

MUCH have you given to me,

Yet I ask for more I come to you not merely for the draught of water, but for the spring;

Not for guidance to the door alone, but to the Master's hall; not only for the gift of love, but for the lover himself.

53

I HAVE come to thee to take thy touch before I begin my day.

Let thy eyes rest upon my eyes for awhile.

Let me take to my work the assurance of thy comradeship, my friend.

Fill my mind with thy music to last through the desert of noise!

Let thy Love's sunshine kiss the peaks of my thoughts and linger in my life's valley where the harvest ripens.

54

STAND before my eyes, and let thy glance touch my songs into a flame.

Stand among thy stars and let me find kindled in their lights my own fire of worship.

The earth is waiting at the world's wayside;

Stand upon the green mantle she has flung upon, thy path; and let me feel in her grass and meadow flowers the spread of my own salutation.

Stand in my lonely evening where my heart watches alone; fill her cup of solitude, and let me feel in me the infinity of thy love.

55

LET thy love play upon my voice and rest on my silence.

Let it pass through my heart into all my movements.

Let thy love like stars shine in the darkness of my sleep and dawn in my awakening.

Let it burn in the flame of my desires

And flow in all currents of my own love.

Let me carry thy love in my life as harp does its music, and give it back to thee at last with my life.

56

YOU hide yourself in your own glory, my King.

The sand-grain and the dew-drop are more proudly apparent than yourself.

The world unabashed calls all things its own that are yours-yet it is never brought to shame.

You make room for us while standing aside in silence; therefore love lights her own lamp to seek you and comes to your worship unbidden

57

WHEN from the house of feast I came back home, the spell of the midnight quieted the dance in my blood.

My heart became silent at once like a deserted theatre with its lamps out.

My mind crossed the dark and stood among the stars, and I saw that we were playing unafraid in the silent courtyard of our King's palace.

58

I WAS musing last night on my spendthrift days, when I thought you spoke to me-

'In youth's careless career you kept all the doors open in your house.

The world went in and out as it pleased-the world with its dust, doubts, and disorder—and with its music.

With the wild crowd I came to you again and again unknown and unbidden.

Had you kept shut your doors in wise seclusion how could I have found my way into your house?'

59

NONE needs BE thrust aside to make room for you.

When love prepares your seat she prepares it for all.

Where the earthly King appears, guards keep out the crowd, but when you come, my King, the whole world comes in your wake.

60

WITH his morning songs he knocks at our door bringing his greetings of sunrise.

With him we take our cattle to the fields and play our flute in the shade.

We lose him to find him again and again in the market crowd.

In the busy hour of the day we come upon him of a sudden, sitting on the wayside grass.

We march when he beats his drum,

We dance when he sings.

We stake our joys and sorrows to play his game to the end.

He stands at the helm of our boat,

With him we rock on the perilous waves.

For him we light our lamp and wait when our day is done.

61

RUN to his side as his comrades where he works with all workers.

Sit around him as his partners where he plays his games.

Follow him where he marches, keeping step to the rhythm of his drumbeats.

Rush into the thick of the fair-the fair of life and death-

For there he is with the crowd in the heart of its tumult.

Do not falter in your journey across the lonely hills over the thorns.

For his call sounds at every step and we know that it is love's voice.

62

WHEN bells sounded in your temple in the morning, men and women hastened down the woodland path with their offerings of fresh flowers.

But I lay on the grass in the shade and let them pass by.

I think it was well that I was idle, for then my flowers were in bud.

At the end of the day they have bloomed, and I go to my evening worship.

63

MY king's road that lies still before my house makes my heart wistful.

It stretches its beckoning hand towards me; its silence calls me out of my home; with dumb entreaties it kisses my feet at every step.

It leads me on I know not to what abandonment, to what sudden gain or surprises of distress.

I know not where its windings end-

But my King's road that lies still before my house makes my heart wistful.

64

WHILE I walk to my King's house at the end of the day the travellers come to ask me-

'What hast thou for King's tribute?'

I do not know what to show them or how to answer, for I have merely this song.

My preparation is large in my house, where the claim is much and many are the claimants.

But when I come to my King's house I have only this single song to offer it for his wreath.

65

MY songs are the same as are the spring flowers, they come from you.

Yet I bring these to you as my own.

You smile and accept them, and you are glad at my joy of pride.

If my song flowers are frail and they fade and drop in the dust, I shall never grieve.

For absence is not loss in your hand, and the fugitive moments that blossom in beauty are kept ever fresh in your wreath.

66

MY king, thou hast called me to play my flute at the roadside, that they who bear the burden of voiceless life may stop in their errands for a moment and sit and wonder before the balcony of thy palace gate; that they may see anew the ever old and find afresh what is ever about them, and say, 'The flowers are in bloom, and the birds sing.'

67

WHEN my first early songs woke in my heart I thought they were the playmates of the morning flowers.

When they shook their wings and flew into the wilderness it seemed to me that they had the spirit of the summer which comes down with a sudden thunder roar to spend its all in laughter.

I thought that they had the mad call of the storm to rush and lose their way beyond the sunset land.

But now when in the evening light I see the blue line of the shore,

I know my songs are the boat that has brought me to the harbour across the wild sea.

68

THERE are numerous strings in your lute, let me add my own among them.

Then when you smite your chords my heart will break its silence and my life will be one with your song.

Amidst your numberless stars let me place my own little lamp. In the dance .of your festival of lights my heart will throb and my life will be one with your smile.

69

LET my song be simple as the waking in the morning, as the dripping of dew from the leaves,

Simple as the colours in clouds and showers of rain in the midnight.

But my lute strings are newly strung and they dart their notes like spears sharp in their newness.

Thus they miss the spirit of the wind and hurt the light of the sky; and these strains of my songs fight hard to push back thy own music.

70

I HAVE seen thee play thy music in life's dancing hall; in the sudden leaf-burst of spring thy laughter has come to. greet me; and lying among field flowers I have heard in the grass thy whisper.

The child has brought to my house the message of thy hope, and the woman the music of thy love.

Now I am waiting on the seashore to feel thee in death, to find life's refrain back again in the star songs of the night.

71

I REMEMBER my childhood when the sunrise, like my play-fellow, would burst in to my bedside with its daily surprise of morning; when the faith in the marvellous bloomed like fresh flowers in my heart every day. looking into the face of the world in simple gladness; when insects, birds and beasts, the common weeds, grass and the clouds had their fullest value of wonder; when the patter of rain at night brought dreams from the fairyland, and mother's voice in the evening gave meaning to the stars.

And then I think of death, and the rise of the curtain and the new morning and my life awakened in its fresh surprise of love.

72

WHEN my heart did not kiss thee in love, O world, thy light missed its full splendour and thy sky watched through the long night with its lighted lamp.

My heart came with her songs to thy side, whispers were exchanged, and she put her wreath on thy neck.

I know she has given thee something which will be treasured with thy stars.

73

THOU hast given me thy seat at thy window front the early hour.

I have spoken to thy silent servants of the road running on thy errands, and have sung with thy choir of the sky.

I have seen the sea in calm bearing its immeasurable silence, and in storm struggling to break open its own mystery of depth.

I have watched the earth in its prodigal feast of youth, and in its slow hours of brooding shadows.

Those who went to sow seeds have heard my greetings,

and those who brought their harvest home or their empty baskets have passed by my songs.

Thus at last my day has ended and now in the evening I sing my last song to say that I have loved thy world.

74

IT HAS fallen upon me, the service of thy singer.

In my songs I have voiced thy spring flowers, and given rhythm to thy rustling leaves.

I have sung into the hush of thy night and peace of thy morning.

The thrill of the first summer rains has passed into my tunes, and the waving of the autumn harvest.

Let not my song cease at last, my Master, when thou breakest my heart to come into my house, but let it burst into thy welcome.

75

GUESTS of my life,

You came in the early dawn, and you in the night,

Your name was uttered by the Spring flowers and yours by the showers of rain.

You brought the harp into my house and you brought the lamp.

After you had taken your leave I found God's footprints on my floor.

Now when I am at the end of my pilgrimage I leave in the evening flowers of worship my salutations to you all.

76

I FELT I saw your face, and I launched my boat in the dark.

Now the morning breaks in smiles and the spring flowers are in bloom.

Yet should the light fail and the flowers fade I will sail onward.

When you made mute signal to me the world slumbered and the darkness was bare.

Now the bells ring loud and the boat is laden with gold.

Yet should the bells become silent and my boat be empty I will sail onward.

Some boats have gone away and some are not ready, but I will not tarry behind.

The sails have filled, the birds come from the other shore.

Yet, if the sails droop, if the message of the shore be lost, I will sail onward.

77

'TRAVELLER, where do you go?

'I go to bathe in the sea in the redd'ning dawn, along the tree-bordered path.'

'Traveller, where is that sea?'

'There where this river ends its course, where the dawn opens into morning, where the day droops to the dusk.'

'Traveller, how many are they who. come with you?'

'I know not how to count them.

They are travelling all night with their lamps lit, they are singing all day through land and water.'

'Traveller, how far is the sea?'

'How far is it we all ask?

The rolling roar of its water swells to the sky when we hush our talk.

It ever seems near yet far.'

'Traveller, the sun is waxing strong.'

'Yes, our journey is long and grievous.

Sing who are weary in spirit, sing who are timid of heart.'

'Traveller, what if the night overtakes you?'

'We shall lie down to sleep till the new morning dawns with its songs, and the call of the sea floats in the air.'

78

COMRADE of the road,

Here are my traveller's greetings to thee.

O Lord of my broken heart, of leave taking and loss, of the grey silence of the dayfall,

My greetings of the ruined house to thee!

O Light of the new-born morning,

Sun of the everlasting day,

My greetings of the undying hope to thee!

My guide,

I am a wayfarer of an endless road,

My greetings of a wanderer to thee.

9

Chitra

9

Chitra

Characters

GOD:

MADANA (Eros)

VASANTA (Lycoris)

MORTALS

CHITRA, daughter of *the King* of Manipur

ARJUNA, a *prince of the house* of *the* Kurus.

He is of the Kshatriya or 'warrior caste', and during the action is living as a Hermit retired in the *forest.*

VILLAGERS from an outlying *district in* Manipur

Scene I

CHITRA : Art thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

MADANA : I am he who was the first born in the heart of the Creator. I bind in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women!

CHITRA: I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds.- And who art thou, my lord?

VASANTA: I am his friend-Vasanta-the King of the Seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them. I am Eternal Youth.

CHITRA: I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

MADANA: But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

CHITRA: I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. With god-like grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. Nevertheless, the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life in my mother's womb-so invincible was my nature, woman though I be.

MADANA: I know, that is why thy father brings thee up as his son. He has taught thee the use of the bow and all the duties of a king.

CHITRA: Yes, that is why I am dressed in man's attire and have left the seclusion of a woman's chamber. I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. My hands are strong to bend the bow, but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of eyes.

MADANA: That requires no schooling, fair one. The eye does its work untaught, and he knows how well, who is struck in the heart.

CHITRA: One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the bank of the Purna river. Tying my horse to a tree trunk I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of the entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets, when all of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves, across my path. I asked him haughtily to move aside, but he heeded not. Then with the sharp end of my bow I pricked him in contempt. Instantly he leapt up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. Then for the first time in my life I felt myself a woman, and knew that a man was before me.

MADANA: At the auspicious hour I teach the man and the woman this supreme lesson to know themselves. What happened after that?

CHITRA. With fear and wonder I asked him 'Who are you?' 'I am Arjuna,' he said, of the great Kuru clan.' I stood petrified like a statue, and forgot to do him obeisance. Was this indeed Arjuna, the one great idol of my dreams! Yes, I had long ago heard how he had vowed a twelve-years' celibacy. Many a day my young ambition had spurred me on to break my lance with him, to challenge him in disguise to single combat, and prove my skill in arms against him. Ah, foolish heart, whither fled thy presumption? Could I but exchange my youth with all its aspirations for the clod of earth under his feet. I should deem it a most precious grace. I know not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost, when suddenly I saw him vanish through the trees. O foolish woman, neither didst thou greet him, nor speak a word, nor beg forgiveness, but stoodest like a barbarian boor while he contemptuously walked away!... Next morning I laid aside my man's clothing. I donned bracelets, anklets, waist-chain, and a gown of purple red silk. The unaccustomed dress clung about my shrinking shame; but I hastened on my quest, and found Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva.

MADANA: Tell me the story to the end. I am the heart-born god, and I understand the mystery of these impulses.

CHITRA: Only vaguely can I remember what things I said, and what answer I got. Do not ask me to tell you all. Shame fell on me like a thunderbolt, yet could not break me to pieces, so utterly hard, so like a man am I. His last words as I walked home pricked my ears like red hot needles 'I have taken the vow of celibacy. I am not fit to be thy husband!' Oh the vow of a man! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, the unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance at the feet of a woman. I broke my bow in two and burnt my arrows in the fire. I hated my strong, lithe arm, scored by drawing the bowstring. O Love, god Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. Now teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak and the weapon of the unarmed hand.

MADANA: I will be thy friend. I will bring the world-conquering Arjuna a captive before thee, to accept his rebellion's sentence at thy hand.

CHITRA: Had I but the time needed, I could win his heart by slow degrees, and ask no help of the gods. I would stand by his side as a comrade, drive the fierce horses of his war-chariot, attend him in the pleasures of the chase, keep guard at night at the entrance of his tent, and help him in all the great duties of a Kshatriya, rescuing the weak, and meting out justice where it is due. Surely at last the day would have come for him to look at me and wonder. 'What boy is this? Has one of my slaves in a former life followed me like my good deeds into this?' I am not the woman who nourishes her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly tears and covering it with the daily patient smile, a widow from her birth. The flower of my desire shall never drop into the dust before it has ripened to fruit. But it is the labour of a lifetime to make one's true self known and honoured. Therefore I have come to thy door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, Vasanta, youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young body this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow.

MADANA: Lady, I grant thy prayer.

VASANTA: Not for the short span of a day, but for one whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round thy limbs.

Scene II

ARJUNA: Was I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over bygone years in the sloping shadows of the evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet. Me thought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstasy into air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm unloosed her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and the tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with a glad surprise. So, if the white lotus bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the live-long day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her arms, and sighing slowly, walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfilment of desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then to have vanished... But who is it that pushes the door?

[Enter CHITRA, dressed as a woman.]

Ah! it is she. Quiet, my heart!... Fear me not, lady! I am a Kshatriya.

CHITRA: Honoured sir, you are my guest. I live in this temple. I know not in what way I can show you hospitality.

ARJUNA: Fair lady, the very sight of you is indeed the highest hospitality. If you will not take it amiss I would ask you a question.

CHITRA: You have permission.

ARJUNA: What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary

temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness?

CHITRA: I harbour a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfilment of which I offer daily prayers to lord Shiva.

ARJUNA: Alas, what can you desire, you who are the desire of the whole world! From the easternmost hill on whose summit the morning sun first prints his fiery foot to the end of the sunset land have I travelled. I have seen whatever is most precious, beautiful and great on the earth. My knowledge shall be yours, only say for what or for whom you seek.

CHITRA: He whom I seek is known to all.

ARJUNA: Indeed! Who may this favourite of the gods be, whose fame has captured your heart?

CHITRA: Sprung from the highest of all royal houses, the greatest of all heroes is he.

ARJUNA: Lady, offer not such a wealth of beauty as is yours on the altar of false reputation. Spurious fame spreads from tongue to tongue like the fog of the early dawn before the sun rises. Tell me who in the highest of kingly lines is the supreme hero?

CHITRA: Hermit, you are jealous of other men's fame. Do you not know that all over the world the royal house of the Kurus is the most famous?

ARJUNA: The house of the Kurus!

CHITRA: And have you never heard of the greatest name of that farfamed house?

ARJUNA: From your own lips let me hear it.

CHITRA: Arjuna, the conqueror of world. I have culled from the mouths of the multitude that imperishable name and hidden it with care in my maiden heart. Hermit, why do you look perturbed? Has that name only a deceitful glitter? Say so, and I will not hesitate to break this casket of my heart and throw the false gem to the dust.

ARJUNA: Be his name and fame, his bravery and prowess false or true, for mercy's sake do not banish him from your heart-for he kneels at your feet even now.

CHITRA: You, Arjuna!

ARJUNA: Yes, I am he, the love-hungered guest at your door.

CHITRA: Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

ARJUNA: But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves the night's vow of obscurity.

CHITRA: Oh, shame upon you! What have you seen in me that makes you false to yourself? Whom do you seek in these dark eyes, in theses milk-white arms, if you are ready to pay for her the price of your probity? Not my true self, I know. Surely this cannot be love, this is not man's highest homage to woman! Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! Yes, now indeed, I know, Arjuna, the fame of your heroic manhood is false.

ARJUNA: Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who - can be but slowly known. While to see you for a moment is to see-perfect completeness once and for ever.

CHITRA: Alas, it is not I, not I Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god. Go, go, my hero, go. Woo not falsehood, offer not your great heart to an illusion! Go.

Scene III

CHITRA: No, impossible. To face that fervent gaze that almost grasps you like clutching hands of the hungry spirit within; to feel his heart struggling to break its bounds urging its passionate cry through the entire body-and then to send him away like a beggar-no, impossible.

[Enter MADANA and VASANTA.]

Ah, god of love, what fearful flame is this with which thou hast enveloped me! I burn, and I burn whatever I touch.

MADANA: I desire to know what happened last night.

CHITRA: At evening I lay down on a grassy bed strewn with the petals of spring flowers, and recollected the wonderful praise of my beauty I had heard from Arjuna;- drinking drop by drop the honey that I had stored during the long day. The history of my past life like that of my former existences was forgotten. I felt like a flower, which has but a few fleeting hours to listen to all the humming flatteries and whispered murmurs of the woodlands and then must lower its eyes from the sky, bend its head and at a breath give itself up to the dust without a cry, thus ending the short story of a perfect moment that has neither past nor future.

VASANTA: A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning.

MADANA: Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song.

CHITRA: The southern breeze caressed me to sleep. From the flowering Malati bower overhead silent kisses dropped over my body. On my hair, my breast, my feet, each flower chose a bed to die on. I slept. And, suddenly in the depth of my sleep, I felt as if some intense eager look, like tapering fingers of flame, touched my slumbering body. I started up and saw the Hermit standing before me. The moon had moved to the west, peering through the leaves to espy this wonder of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air was heavy with perfume; the silence of the night was vocal with the chirping of crickets; the reflections of the trees hung motionless in the lake; and with his staff in his hand he stood, tall and straight and still, like a forest tree. It seemed to me that I had, on opening my eyes, died to all realities of life and undergone a dream birth into a shadow land. Shame slipped to my feet like loosened clothes. I heard his call-'Beloved, my most beloved!' And all my forgotten lives united

as one and responded to it I said, 'Take me, take all I am!' And I stretched out my arms to him. The moon set behind the trees. One curtain of darkness covered all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstasy... With the first gleam of light, the first twitter of birds, I rose up and sat leaning on my left arm. He lay asleep with a vague smile about his lips like the crescent moon in the morning. The rosy red glow of the dawn fell upon his noble forehead. I sighed and stood up. I drew together the leafy lianas to screen the streaming sun from his face. I looked about me and saw the same old earth. I remembered what I used to be, and ran and ran like a deer afraid of her own shadow, through the forest path strewn with Shephali flowers. I found a lonely nook, and sitting down covered my face with both hands, and tried to weep and cry. But no tears came to my eyes.

MADANA: Alas, thou daughter of mortals! I stole from the divine storehouse the fragrant wine of heaven, filled with it one earthly night to the brim, and placed it in thy hand to drink-yet still I hear this cry of anguish!

CHITRA: [bitterly]. Who drank it? The rarest completion of life's desire, the first union of love was proffered to me, but was wrested from my grasp? This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me taking with it the only monument of that sweet union, as the petals fall from an overblown flower; and the woman ashamed of her naked poverty will sit weeping day and night. Lord Love, this cursed appearance companions me like a demon robbing me of all the prizes of love-all the kisses for which my heart is athirst.

MADANA: Alas, how vain thy single night had been! The barque of joy came in sight, but the waves would not let it touch the shore.

CHITRA: Heaven came so close to my hand that I forgot for a moment that it had not reached me. But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved and see her caressed by him. O god, take back thy boon!

MADANA: But if I take it from you how can you stand before your lover? To snatch away the cup from his lips when he has scarcely drained his first draught of pleasure, would not that be cruel? With what resentful anger lie must regard thee then?

CHITRA: That would be far better than this. I will reveal my true self to him, a nobler thing than this disguise. If he rejects it, if he spurns me and breaks my heart, I will bear even that in silence.

VASANTA: Listen to my advice. When with the advent of autumn the flowering season is over then comes the triumph of fruitage. A time will come of itself when the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee. O child, go back to thy mad festival.

Scene IV

CHITRA: Why do you watch me like that, my warrior ?

ARJUNA: I watch how you weave that garland. Skill and grace, the twin brother and sister, are dancing playfully on your finger tips. I am watching and thinking.

CHITRA: What are you thinking, sir?

ARJUNA: I am thinking that you, with this same lightness of touch and sweetness, are weaving my days of exile into an immortal wreath, to crown me when I return home.

CHITRAL: Home! But this love is not for a home!

ARJUNA: Not for a home?

CHITRA: No. Never talk of that. Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born; leave it beautifully to die at the day's end among all fading blossoms and decaying leaves. Do not take it to your palace hall to fling it on the stony floor which knows no pity for things that fade and are forgotten.

ARJUNA: Is ours that kind of love?

CHITRA: Yes, no other! Why regret it? That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns into pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it. Take it and keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn... The day is done. Put this garland on. I am tired. Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away at the sweet meeting of our lips.

ARJUNA: Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of prayer bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees!

Scene V

VASANTA: I cannot keep pace with thee, my friend! I am tired. It is a hard task to keep alive the fire thou hast kindled. Sleep overtakes me, the fan drops from my hand, and cold ashes cover the glow of the fire. I start up again from my slumber and with all my might rescue the weary flame. But this can go on no longer.

MADANA: I know, thou art as fickle as a child. Ever restless is thy play in heaven and on earth. Things that thou for days buildest up with endless detail thou dost shatter in a moment without regret. But this work of ours is nearly finished. Pleasure-winged days fly fast, and the year, almost at its end, swoons in rapturous bliss.

Scene VI

ARJUNA: I woke in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to inclose it, no king's

crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My Kshatriya's right arm, idly occupied in holding it, forgets its duties.

[Enter CHITRA.]

CHITRA: Tell me your thoughts, sir!

ARJUNA: My mind is busy with thoughts of hunting to-day. See, how the rain pours in torrents and fiercely beats upon the hillside. The dark shadow of the clouds hangs heavily over the forest, and the swollen stream, like reckless youth, overleaps all barriers with mocking laughter. On such rainy days we five brothers would go to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were glad times. Our hearts danced to the drumbeat of rumbling clouds. The woods resounded with the screams of peacocks. Timid deer could not hear our approaching steps for the patter of rain and the noise of waterfalls; the leopards would leave their tracks on the wet earth, betraying their lairs. Our sport. over, we dared each other to swim across turbulent streams on our way back home. The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting.

CHITRA: First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer your pursue must needs be caught[7]

No, not yet. Like a dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in your hands. Yet this magic deer runs ever free and untouched.

ARJUNA: My love, have you no home where kind hearts are waiting for your return? A home which you once made sweet with your gentle service and whose light went out when you left it for this wilderness?

CHITRA: Why these questions? Are the hours of unthinking pleasure over? Do you not know that I am no more than what you see before you? For me there is no vista beyond. The dew that hangs on the tip of a Kinsuka petal has neither name nor destination. It offers no answer to any question. She whom you love is like that perfect bead of dew.

ARJUNA: Has she no tie with the world? Can she be merely like a fragment of heaven dropped on the earth through the carelessness of a wanton god?

CHITRA: Yes.

ARJUNA: Ah, that is why I always seem about to lose you. My heart is unsatisfied, my mind knows no peace. Come closer to me, unattainable one! Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love.

CHITRA: Why this vain effort to catch and keep the tints of the clouds, the dance of the waves, the smell of the flowers?

ARJUNA: Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, something that can last longer than pleasure, that can endure even through suffering.

CHITRA: Hero mine, the year is not yet full, and you are tired already! Now I know that it is Heaven's blessing that has made the flower's term of life short. Could this body of mine have drooped and died with the flowers of last spring it surely would have died with honour. Yet, its days are numbered, my love. Spare it not, press it dry of honey, for fear your beggar's heart come back to it again and again with unsated desire, like a thirsty bee when summer blossoms lie dead in the dust.

Scene VII

MADANA: To-night is thy last night.

VASANTA: The loveliness of your body will return tomorrow to the inexhaustible stores of the spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips freed from the memory of Arjuna's kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh Asoka leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers.

CHITRA: O gods, grant me this my prayer! To-night, in its last hour let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame.

MADANA: Thou shalt have thy wish.

Scene VIII

VILLAGERS: Who will protect us now?

ARJUNA: Why, by what danger are you threatened?

VILLAGERS: The robbers are pouring from the northern hills like a mountain flood to devastate our village.

ARJUNA: Have. you in this kingdom no warden?

VILLAGERS: Princess Chitra was the terror of all evil doers. While she was in this happy land we feared natural deaths, but had no other fears. Now she has gone on a pilgrimage, and none knows where to find her.

ARJUNA: Is the warden of this country a woman?

VILLAGERS: Yes, she is our father and mother in one.

[Exeunt.]

[Enter CHITRA.]

CHITRA: Why are you sitting alone?

ARJUNA: I am trying to imagine what kind of woman Princess Chitra may be. I hear so many stories of her from all sorts of men.

CHITRA: Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not our hero's heart.

ARJUNA: They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness.

CHITRA: That, indeed, is her greatest misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman; when she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments; then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements? Could you have seen her only yesterday in the court of the Lord Shiva's temple by the forest path, you would have passed by without deigning to look at her. But have you grown so weary of woman's beauty that you seek in her for a man's strength?

With green leaves wet from the spray of the foaming waterfall, I have made our noonday bed in a cavern dark as night. There the cool of the soft green mosses thick on the black and dripping stone, kisses your eyes to sleep. Let me guide you thither.

ARJUNA: Not to-day, beloved.

CHITRA: Why not to-day?

ARJUNA: I have heard that a horde of robbers has neared the plains. Needs must I go and prepare my weapons to protect the frightened villagers.

CHITRA: You need have no fear for them. Before she started on her pilgrimage, Princess Chitra had set strong guards at all the frontier passes.

ARJUNA: Yet permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya's work. With new glory will I ennoble this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.

CHITRA: What if I refuse to let you go, if I keep you entwined in my arms? Would you rudely snatch yourself free and leave me? Go then! But you must know that the liana, once broken in two, never joins again. Go, if your thirst is quenched. But, if not, then remember that the goddess of pleasure is fickle, and waits for no man. Sit for a while, my lord! Tell me what uneasy thoughts tease you. Who occupied your mind to-day? Is it Chitra?

ARJUNA: Yes, it is Chitra. I wonder in fulfilment of what vow she has gone on her pilgrimage. Of what could she stand in need?

CHITRA: Her needs? Why, what has she ever had, the unfortunate creature? Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman's heart in a bare cell. She is obscured, she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sound sweet to man's ear.

ARJUNA: I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveller come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and garden-trees look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story.

CHITRA: What more is there to tell?

ARJUNA: I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope all round her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her dugs with a fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength, are beautiful! My heart is restless, fair one, like a serpent reviving from his long winter's sleep. Come, let us both race on swift horses side by side, like twin orbs of light sweeping through space. Out from this slumbrous prison of green gloom, this dank, dense cover of perfumed intoxication, choking breath.

CHITRA: Arjuna, tell me true, if, now at once, by some magic I could shake myself free from this voluptuous softness, this timid bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the world, and fling it from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able to bear it? If I stand up straight and strong with I the strength of a daring heart spurning the wiles and arts of twining weakness, if I hold my head high like a tall young mountain fir, no longer trailing in the dust like a liana, shall I then appeal to man's eye[7] No, no, you could not endure it. It is better that I should keep spread about me all the dainty playthings of fugitive youth, and wait for you in patience. When it pleases you to return, I will smilingly pour out for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body. When you are tired and satiated with this wine, you can go to work or play; and when I grow old I will accept humbly and gratefully whatever corner is left for me. Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmate of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm.

ARJUNA: I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image. I cannot touch you, I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of being trying to rend as under the languorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth. Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music. Let me for ever sit with my hope on the brink of its realization, and thus end my days.

Scene IX

CHITRA [cloaked]: My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop? Is this, indeed, the end? No, when all is done something still remains, and that is my last sacrifice at your feet.

I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, god of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple. [*Unveiling* in her original male attire] Now, look at your worshipper with gracious eyes.

I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshipped. I have many flaws and blemishes. I am a traveller in the great world-path, my garments are dirty, and my feet are bleeding with thorns. Where should I achieve flower-beauty, the unsullied loveliness of a moment's life? The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come!

I am Chitra, the king's daughter. Perhaps you will remember the day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman. I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. To day I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king.

ARJUNA: Beloved, my life is full.

10

SADHANA

10

Sadhana

The Relation of the Individual to the Universe

THE civilization of ancient Greece was nurtured within city walls. In fact, all the modern civilizations have their cradles of brick and mortar.

These walls leave their mark deep in the minds of men. They set up a principle of 'divide and rule' in our mental outlook, which begets in us a habit of securing all our conquests by fortifying them and separating them from one another. We divide nation and nation, knowledge and knowledge, man and nature. It breeds in us a strong suspicion of whatever is beyond the barriers we have built, and everything has to fight hard for its entrance into our recognition.

When the first Aryan invaders appeared in India it was a vast land of forests, and the new-comers rapidly took advantage of them. These forests afforded them shelter from the fierce heat of the sun and the ravages of tropical storms, pastures for cattle, fuel for sacrificial fire, and materials for building cottages. And the different Aryan clans with their patriarchal heads settled in the different forest tracts which had some special advantage of natural protection, and food and water in plenty.

Thus in India it was in the forests that our civilization had its birth, and it took a distinct character from this origin and environment. It was surrounded by the vast life of nature, was fed and clothed by her, and had the closest and most constant intercourse with her varying aspects.

Such a life, it may be thought, tends to have the effect of dulling human intelligence and dwarfing the incentives to progress by lowering the standards of existence. But in ancient India we find that the circumstances of forest life did not overcome man's mind, and did not enfeeble the current of his energies, but only gave to it a particular direction. Having been in constant contact with the living growth of nature, his mind was free from the desire to extend his dominion by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions. His aim was not to acquire but to realise, to enlarge his consciousness by growing with and growing into his surroundings. He felt that truth is all-comprehensive, that there is no such thing as absolute isolation in existence, and the only way of attaining truth is through the interpenetration of our being into all objects. To realise this great harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the world was the endeavour of the forest-dwelling sages of ancient India.

In later days there came a time when these primeval forests gave way to cultivated fields, and wealthy cities sprang up on all sides. Mighty kingdoms were established, which had communications with all the great powers of the world. But even in the heyday of its material prosperity the heart of India ever looked back with adoration upon the early ideal of strenuous self-realization, and the dignity of the simple life of the forest hermitage; and drew its best inspiration from the wisdom stored there.

The west seems to take a pride in thinking that it is subduing nature; as if we are living in a hostile world where we have to wrest everything we want from an unwilling and alien arrangement of things. This sentiment is the product of the city-wall habit and training of mind.

For in the city life man naturally directs the concentrated light of his mental vision upon his own life and works, and this creates an artificial dissociation between himself and the Universal Nature within whose bosom he lies.

But in India the point of view was different; it included the world with the man as one great truth. India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal. She felt we could have no communication whatever with our surroundings if they were absolutely foreign to its. Man's complaint against nature is that he has to acquire most of his necessaries by his own efforts. Yes, but his efforts are not in vain; he is reaping success every day, and that shows there is a rational connection between him and nature, for we never can make anything our own except that which is truly related to us.

We can look upon. a road from two different points of view. One regards it as dividing us from the object of our desire; in that case we count every step of our journey over it as something attained by force in the face of obstruction. The other sees it as the road which leads us to our destination; and as such it is part of our goal. It is already the beginning of our attainment, and *by* journeying over it we can only gain that which in itself it offers to us. This last point of view is that of India with regard to nature. For her, the great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can; use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal, and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which works through nature.

In the west the prevalent feeling is that nature belongs exclusively to inanimate things and to beasts, that there is a sudden unaccountable break where human-nature begins.

According to it, everything that is low in the scale of beings is merely nature, and whatever has the stamp of perfection on it, intellectual or moral, is human-nature. It is like dividing the bud and the blossom into two separate categories, and putting their grace to the credit of two different and antithetical principles. But the Indian mind never has any hesitation in acknowledging its kinship with nature, its unbroken relation with all.

The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realise this great harmony in feeling and in action. With meditation and service, with a regulation. of her life, she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything had a spiritual meaning to her. The earth, water and light, fruits and flowers, to her were not merely physical phenomena to be turned to use and then left aside. They were necessary to her in the attainment of her ideal of perfection, as every note is necessary to the completeness of the symphony. India intuitively felt that the essential fact of this world has a vital meaning for us; we have to be fully alive to it and establish a conscious relation with it, not merely impelled by scientific curiosity or greed of material advantage, but realising it in the spirit of sympathy, with a large feeling of joy and peace.

The man of science knows, in one aspect, that the world is not merely what it appears to be to our senses; he knows that earth and water are really the play of forces that manifest themselves to us as earth and water-how, we can but partially apprehend. Likewise the man who has his spiritual eyes open knows that the ultimate truth about earth and water lies in our apprehension of the eternal will which works in time and takes shape in the forces we realise under those aspects. This is not mere knowledge, as science is, but it is a perception of the soul by the soul. This does not lead us to power, as knowledge does, but it gives us joy, which is the product of the union of kindred things. The man whose acquaintance with the world does not lead him deeper than science leads him, will never understand what it is that the man with the spiritual vision finds in these natural phenomena. The water does not merely cleanse his limbs, but it purifies his heart; for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than a physical contact-it is a living presence: When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prisonhouse whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal .spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established. In India men are enjoined to be fully awake to the fact that they are in the closest relation to things around them, body and soul, and that they are to hail the morning sun, the flowing water, the fruitful earth, as the manifestation of the same living truth which holds them in its embrace. Thus the text of our everyday meditation is the Gayatri, a verse which is considered to be the epitome of all the Vedas. By its help we try to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man; we learn to perceive the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit, whose power creates the earth, the sky, and the stars, and at the same time irradiates our minds with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world.

It is not true that India has tried to ignore differences of value in different things, for she knows that would make life impossible. The sense of the superiority of man in the scale of creation has not been absent from her mind. But she has had her own idea as to that in which his superiority really consists. It is not in the power of possession but in the power of union. Therefore India chose her places of pilgrimage wherever there was in nature some special grandeur or beauty, so that her mind could come out of its world of narrow necessities and realise its place in the infinite. This was the reason why in India a whole people who once were meat-eaters gave up taking animal food to cultivate the sentiment of universal sympathy for life, an event unique in the history of mankind.

India knew that when by physical and mental barriers we violently detach ourselves from the inexhaustible life of nature; when we become merely man, not man-in-the-universe, we create bewildering problems, and having shut off the source of their solution, we try all kinds of artificial methods each of which brings its own crop of interminable difficulties. When man leaves his resting-place in universal nature, when he walks on the single rope of humanity, it means either a dance or a fall for him, he has ceaselessly to strain every nerve and muscle to keep his balance at each step, and then, in the intervals of his weariness, he fulminates against Providence and feels a secret pride and satisfaction in thinking that he has been unfairly dealt with by the whole scheme of things.

But this cannot go on for ever. Man must realise the wholeness of his existence, his place in the infinite; he must know that hard as he may strive he can never create his honey within the cells of his hive, for the perennial supply of his life food is outside their walls. He must know that when man shuts himself out from the vitalising and purifying touch of the infinite, and falls back unon himself for his sustenance and his healing, then he goads himself into madness, tears himself into shreds, and eats his own substance. Deprived of the background of the whole, his poverty loses its one great quality, which is simplicity, and becomes squalid and shamefaced. His wealth is no longer magnanimous; it grows merely extravagant. His appetites do not minister to his life, keeping to the limits of their purpose; they become an end in themselves and set fire to his life and play the fiddle in the lurid light of the conflagration. Then it is that in our self-expression we try to startle and not to attract; in art we strive for originality and lose sight of truth which is old and yet ever new; in literature we miss the complete view of man which is simple and yet great. Man appears instead as a psychological problem, or as the embodiment of a passion that is intense because abnormal, being exhibited in the glare of a fiercely emphatic artificial light. When man's

consciousness is restricted only to the immediate vicinity of his human self, the deeper roots of his nature do not find their permanent soil, his spirit is ever on the brink of starvation, and in the place of healthful strength he substitutes rounds of stimulation. Then it is that man misses his inner perspective and measures his greatness by its bulk and not by its vital link with the infinite, judges his activity by its movement and not by the repose of perfection-the repose which is in the starry heavens, in the ever-flowing rhythmic dance of creation.

The first invasion of India has its exact parallel in do invasion of America by the European settlers. They also were confronted with primeval forests and a fierce struggle with aboriginal races. But this struggle between man and man, and man and nature lasted till the very end; they never came to any terms. In India the forests which were the habitation of barbarians became the sanctuary of sages, but in America these great living cathedrals of nature had no deeper significance to man. They brought wealth and power to him, and perhaps at times they ministered to his enjoyment of beauty, and inspired a solitary poet. They never acquired a sacred association in the hearts of men as the site of some great spiritual reconcilement where man's soul had its meetingplace with the soul of the world.

I do not for a moment wish to suggest that things should have been otherwise. It would be an utter waste of opportunities if history were to repeat itself exactly in the same manner in every place. It is best for the commerce of the spirit that people differently situated should bring their different produces into the market of humanity, each, of which is complementary and necessary to the others. All that I wish to say is that India at the outset of her career met with a special combination of circumstances which was not lost upon her. She had, according to her opportunities, thought and pondered, striven and suffered, dived into the depths of existence, and achieved something which surely cannot be without its value to people whose evolution in history took a different way altogether. Man for his perfect growth requires all the living elements that constitute his complex life; that is why his food has to be cultivated in different fields and brought from different sources.

Civilization is a kind of mould that each nation is busy making for itself to shape its men and women according to its best ideal. All its institutions, its legislature, its standard of approbation and condemnation, its conscious and unconscious teachings tend toward that object. The modern civilization of the west, by all its organised efforts, is trying to turn out men perfect in physical, intellectual, and moral efficiency. There the vast energies of the nations are employed in extending man's power over his surroundings, and people are combining and straining every faculty to possess and to turn to account all that they can lay their hands upon, to overcome every obstacle on their path of conquest. They are ever disciplining themselves to fight nature and other .aces; their armaments are getting more and more stupendous every day; their machines, their appliances, their organisations go on multiplying at an amazing rate. This is a splendid achievement, no doubt, and a wonderful manifestation of man's masterfulness, which knows no obstacle and has for its object the supremacy of himself over everything else.

The ancient civilization of India had its own ideal of perfection towards which its efforts were directed. Its aim was not attaining power, and it neglected to cultivate to the utmost its capacities, and to organize men for defensive and offensive purposes, for co-operation in the acquisition of wealth and for military and political ascendancy. The ideal that India tried to realise led her best men to the isolation of a contemplative life, and the treasures that she gained for mankind by penetrating into the mysteries of reality cost her dear in the sphere of worldly success. Yet, this also was a sublime achievement,- it was a supreme manifestation of that human aspiration which knows no limit, and which has for its object nothing less than the realization of the infinite.

There were the virtuous, the wise, the courageous; there were the statesmen, kings and emperors of India; but whom amongst all these classes did she look up to and choose to be the representative of men?

They were the rishis. What were the rishis? *They who having attained the supreme soul in knowledge were filled with wisdom, and having found him in union with the soul were in perfect harmony with the innerself; they having realised him in the heart were free from all selfish desires, and having experienced him in all the activities of the world, had attained calmness. The rishis were they who having reached the supreme God from our all sides had found abiding peace, had become united with all, had entered into the life of the Universe*[1].

Thus the state of realising our relationship with all, of entering into everything through union with God, was considered in India to be the ultimate end and fulfilment of humanity.

Man can destroy and plunder, earn and accumulate, invent and discover, but he is great because his soul comprehends all. It is dire destruction for him when he envelopes his soul in a dead shell of callous habits, and when a blind fury of works whirls round him like an eddying dust storm, shutting out the horizon. That indeed kills the very spirit of his being, which is the spirit of comprehension. Essentially man is not a slave either of himself or of the world; but he is a lover. His freedom and fulfilment is in love, which is another name for perfect comprehension. By this power of comprehension, this permeation of his being, he is united with the all-pervading Spirit, who is also the breath of his soul. Where a man tries to raise himself to eminence by pushing and jostling all others, to achieve a distinction by which he prides himself to be more than everybody else, there he is alienated from that Spirit. This is why the Upanishads describe those who have attained

1. *Samprapyainam rishayo jananatriptah*
Kritatmano' vitaragah pracantah
te sarvagam sarvatah prapya dhirah
Yuktatmanah sarvamevavicanti.

the goal of human life as 'peaceful'[1] and as *'at-one-witli-God,*[2] meaning that they are in perfect harmony with man and nature, and therefore in undisturbed union with God.

We have a glimpse of the same truth in the teachings of Jesus when he says, 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for. a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven'-which implies that whatever we treasure for ourselves separates us from others; our possessions are our limitations. He who is bent upon accumulating riches is unable, with his ego continually bulging, to pass through the gates of comprehension of the spiritual world, which is the world of perfect harmony; he is shut up within the narrow walls of his limited acquisitions.

Hence the spirit of the teachings of the Upanishads is; In order to find him you must embrace all. In the pursuit of wealth you really give up everything to gain a few things, and that is not the way to attain him who is completeness.

Some modern philosophers of Europe, who are directly or indirectly indebted to the Upanishads, far from realising their debt, maintain that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world. In a word, that the Infinite Being is to be found nowhere except in metaphysics. It may be, that such a doctrine has been and still is prevalent with a section of our countrymen. But this is certainly not in accord with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind. Instead, it is the practice of realising and affirming the presence of the infinite in all things which has been its constant inspiration.

We are enjoined to see *whatever there is in the* world as being enveloped *by God.*[3]

I bow to God over *and over again who is in fire and in* water; who permeates *the whole world, who is in the annual crops as* well *as* in *the* perennial trees.'[4]

Can this be God abstracted from the world? Instead, it signifies not merely seeing him in all things, but saluting him, in all the objects of the world. The attitude of the God-conscious man of the Upanishad towards the universe is one of a deep feeling of adoration. His object of worship is present everywhere. It is the one living truth that makes all realities true. This truth is not only of knowledge but of devotion. *'Namonamah,'*- bow to him everywhere, and over and over again. It is recognized in the outburst of the Rishi, who addresses the whole world in a sudden ecstasy of joy: *Listen to me, ye sons of the immortal spirit, ye who live in the heavenly abode, I have known the Supreme Person whose light shines forth from beyond the darkness.*[5] *Do* we not find the overwhelming delight of a direct and positive experience where there is not the least trace of vagueness or passivity?

Buddha, who developed the practical side of the teaching of the Upanishads, preached the same message when he said. *With everything, whether it is above or below, remote* or, *near, visible or invisible, thou shalt preserve a relation of unlimited love without any animosity or without a desire to kill. To live in such a consciousness while standing or walking, sitting or lying down till you* are asleep, is Brahma vihara, or, in other words, is living and moving and having your joy in the spirit of Brahma.

What is that spirit? The Upanishad says, *The being who is in his essence the light and life of all, who is world-conscious, is Brahma*[6] *To* feel all, to be conscious of everything, is his spirit. We are immersed in his consciousness body and soul. It is through his consciousness that the sun attracts the earth; it is through his consciousness that the lightwaves are being transmitted from planet to planet.

Not only in space, but *this light and life, this all-feeling being is in* our souls.[7] He is all-conscious in space, or the world of extension; and he is all-conscious in soul, or the world of intension.

Thus to attain our world-consciousness, we have to unite our feeling with this all-pervasive infinite feeling. In fact, the only true human progress is coincident with this widening of the range of feeling. All our poetry, philosophy, science, art, and religion are serving to. extend the scope our consciousness towards higher arid larger spheres. Man does not acquire rights through occupation of larger space, nor through external conduct, but his rights extend only so far as he is real, and his reality is measured by the scope of his consciousness.

We have, however, to pay a price for this attainment of the freedom of consciousness. What is the price? It is to give one's self away. Our soul can realise itself truly only by denying itself. The Upanishad says, Thou *shalt gain by giving away,*[8] *Thou shalt not covet*[9]

In the Gita we are advised to work disinterestedly, abandoning all lust for the result. Many outsiders conclude from this teaching that the conception of the world as something unreal lies at the root of the socalled disinterestedness preached in India. But the reverse is the truth.

The man who aims at his own aggrandizement underrates everything else. Compared with himself the rest of the world is unreal. Thus in order to be fully conscious of the reality of all, man has to be free himself from the bonds of personal desires. This discipline we have to go through to prepare ourselves for our social duties-for sharing the burdens of our fellow-beings. Every endeavour to attain a larger life requires of man 'to gain by giving away, and not to be greedy.' And

1. *Pracantah.*
2. *Yuktamanah.*
3. *Icavasyamidam sarvam yat kincha jagatyan jagat.*
4. *Yo devo'gnau y'opsu yo vicvambhuvanamavieca ya oshadhishu yo vanaspatishu tasmai devaya namonamah.*
5. *Crinvantu vicve amritasya putra a ye divya dhamani tasthuh vedahametam purusham mahantam aditya varnam tamasah parastat.*
6. *Yacchaymasminnakace tejomayo' mritamayah purushah sarvanubhuh.*
7. *Yacchayamasminnatmani tejomayo' mritamayah purushah sarvanubhuh.*
8. *Tyaktena bhunjithah.*
9. *Ma gridhah.*

thus to expand gradually the consciousness of one's unity with all is the striving of humanity.

The Infinite in India was not a thin nonentity, void of all content. The Rishis of India asserted emphatically 'To know him in this life is to be true; not to know him in this life is the desolation of death.'[1] How to know him then? 'By realising him in each and all.'[2] Not only in nature, but in the family, in society, and in the state, the more we realise the World-conscious in all, the better for us. Failing to realise this, we turn our faces to destruction.

It fills me with great joy and a high hope for the future of humanity when I realise that there was a time in the remote past when our poet-prophets stood under the lavish sunshine of an Indian sky and greeted the world with the glad recognition of kindred. It was not an anthropomorphic hallucination. It was not seeing man reflected everywhere in grotesquely exaggerated images, and witnessing the human drama acted on a gigantic scale in nature's arena of flitting lights and shadows. On the contrary, it meant crossing the limiting barriers of the individual, to become more than man, to become one with the All. It was not a mere play of the imagination, but it was the liberation of consciousness from all the mystifications and exaggerations of the self. These ancient seers felt in the serene depth of their mind that the same energy, which vibrates and passes into the endless forms of the world, manifests itself in our inner being as consciousness; and there is no break in unity. For these seers there was no gap in their luminous vision of perfection. They never acknowledged even death itself as creating a chasm in the field of reality. They said, *His refllection is death as well* as immortality.[3] They did not recognize any essential opposition between life and death, and they said with absolute assurance, 'It is life that is death[4] They saluted with the same serenity of gladness 'life in its aspect of appearing and in its aspect of departure'-*That which is past is* hidden *in life, and* that *which is to* come.[5] They knew that mere appearance and disappearance are on the surface like waves on the sea, but life which is permanent knows no decay or diminution.

Everything has sprung from immortal life *and is vibrating* with life,[6] for life is immense.[7]

This is the noble heritage from our forefathers waiting to be claimed by us as our own, this ideal of the supreme freedom of consciousness. It is not merely intellectual or emotional, it has an ethical basis, and it must be translated into action. In the Upanishad it is said, *The supreme being is all pervading, therefore he is the innate good in* all.[8] To be truly united in knowledge, love, and service with all beings, and thus to realise one's self in the all-pervading God is the essence of goodness, and this is the keynote of the teachings of the Upanishads: *Life is immense*![9]

1. *Iha chet avedit atha satyamasti, nachet iha avedit mahati vinashtih.*
2. *Bhuteshu bhuteshu vichintya.*
3. *Yasya chhayamritam yasya mrityuh.*
4. *Prano mrityuh.*
5. *Namo astu ayate namo astu parayate. Prane ha bhutam bhavyan cha.*
6. *Yadidan kinncha prana ejati nihsritam.*
7. *Prano virat.*
8. Sarvavyapi sa bhagavan tasmat sarvagatah civah.
9. Prano virat.

Soul Consciousness

WE have seen that it was the aspiration of ancient India to live and move and have its joy in Brahma, the all-conscious and all-pervading Spirit, by extending its field of consciousness over all the world. But that, it may be urged, is an impossible task for man to achieve. If this extension of consciousness be an outward process, then it is endless; it is like attempting to cross the ocean after ladling out its water. By beginning to try to realise all, one has to end by realising nothing.

But, in reality, it is not so absurd as it sounds. Man has every day to solve this problem of enlarging his region and adjusting his burdens. His burdens are many, too numerous for him to carry, but he knows that by adopting a system he can lighten the weight of his load. Whenever they feel too complicated and unwieldy, he knows it is because he has not been able to hit upon the system which would have set everything in place and distributed the weight evenly. This search for system is really a search for unity, for synthesis; it is our attempt to harmonise the heterogeneous complexity of outward materials by an inner adjustment. In the search we gradually become aware that to find out the One is to possess the All; that there, indeed, is our last and highest privilege. It is based on the law of that unity which is, if we only know it, our abiding strength. Its living principle is the power that is in truth; the truth of that unity which comprehends multiplicity. Facts are many, but the truth is one. The animal intelligence knows facts, the human mind has power to apprehend truth. The apple falls from the tree, the rain descends upon the earth-you can go on burdening your memory with such facts and never come to an end. But once you get hold of the law of gravitation you can dispense with the necessity of collecting facts *ad infinitum. You* have got at one truth which governs numberless facts. This discovery of a truth is pure joy to man-it is a liberation of his mind. For, a mere fact is like a blind lane, it leads only to itself-it has no beyond. But a truth opens up a whole horizon, it leads us to the infinite. That is the reason why, when a man like Darwin discovers some simple general truth about Biology, it does not stop there, but like a lamp shedding its light far beyond the object for which it was lighted, it illumines the whole region of human life and thought, transcending its original purpose. Thus we find that truth, while investing all facts, is not a mere aggregate of facts-it surpasses them on all sides and points to the infinite reality.

As in the region of knowledge so in that of consciousness, man must clearly realise some central truth which will give him an outlook over the widest possible field. And that is the object which the Upanishad has in view when it *says, Know thine own Soul*. Or, in other words, realise the one great principle of unity that there is in every man.

All our egoistic impulses, our selfish desires, obscure our true vision of the soul. For they only indicate our own narrow self. When we are conscious of our soul, we perceive the inner being that transcends our ego and has its deeper affinity with the All.

Children, when they begin to learn each separate letter of the alphabet, find no pleasure in it, because they miss the real purpose of the lesson; in fact, while letters claim our attention only in themselves and as isolated things, they fatigue us. They become a source of joy to us only when they combine into words and sentences and convey an idea.

Likewise, our soul when detached and imprisoned within the narrow limits of a self loses its significance. For its very essence is unity. It can only find out its truth by unifying itself with others, and only then it has its joy. Man was troubled and he lived in a state of fear so long as he had not discovered the uniformity of law in nature; till then the world was alien to him. The law that he discovered is nothing but the perception of harmony that prevails between reason, which is the soul of man, and the workings of the world. This is the bond of union through which man is related to the world in which he live, and he feels an exceeding joy when he finds this out, for then he realise; himself in his surroundings. To understand anything is to find in it something which is our own, and it is the discovery of ourselves outside its which makes us glad. This relation of understanding is partial, but the relation of love is complete. In love the sense of difference is obliterated" and the human soul fulfils its purpose in perfection, transcending the limits of itself and reaching across the threshold of the infinite. Therefore love is the highest bliss that man can attain to, for through it alone he truly knows that he is more than himself, and that he is at one with the All.

This principle of unity which man has in his soul is ever active, establishing relations far and wide through literature, art, and science, society, statecraft, and religion. Our great Revealers are they who make manifest the true meaning of the soul by giving up self for the love of mankind. They face calumny and persecution, deprivation and death in their service of love. They live the life of the soul, not of the self, and thus they prove to us the ultimate truth of humanity. We call them *Mahatmas'* 'the men of the great soul.'

It is said in one of the Upanishads: *It is not that thou lovest thy son because thou desirest him, but thou lovest thy son because thou desirest thine own soul*[1] The meaning of this is, that whomsoever we love, in him we find our own soul in the highest sense. The final truth of our existence lies in this. *Parmatma,* the supreme soul, is in me, as well as in my son, and my joy in my son is the realization of this truth. It has become quite a commonplace fact, yet it is wonderful to think upon, that the joys and sorrows of our loved ones are joys and sorrows to us-nay, they are more.

1. Na ya are putrasya kamaya putrah priyo bhavati, atmanastu kamaya putrah priyo priyo bhavati

Why so? Because in them we have grown larger, in them we have touched that great truth which comprehends the whole universe.

It very often happens that our love for our children, our friends, or other loved ones, debars us from the further realization of our soul. It enlarges our scope of consciousness, no doubt, yet it sets a limit to its freest expansion. Nevertheless it is the first step, and all the wonder lies in this first step itself. It shows to us the true nature of our soul. From it we know, for certain, that our highest joy is in the losing of our egoistic self and in the uniting with others. This love gives us a new power and insight and beauty of mind to the extent of the limits we set around it, but ceases to do so if those limits lose their elasticity, and militate against the spirit of love altogether; then our friendships become exclusive, our families selfish and inhospitable, our nations insular and aggressively inimical to other races. It is like putting a burning light within a sealed enclosure, which shines brightly till the poisonous gases accumulate and smother the flame. Nevertheless it has proved its truth before it dies, and made known the joy of freedom from the grip of the darkness, blind and empty and cold.

According to the Upanishads, the key to cosmic consciousness, to God-consciousness, is in the consciousness of the soul. To know our soul apart from the self is the first step towards the realization of the supreme deliverance. We must know with absolute certainty that essentially we are spirit. This we can do by winning mastery over self, by rising above all pride and greed and fear, by knowing that worldly losses and physical death can take nothing away from the truth and the greatness of our soul. The chick knows when it breaks through the self-centred isolation of its egg that the hard shell which covered it so long was not really a part of its life. That shell is a dead thing, it has no growth, it affords no glimpse whatever of the vast beyond that lies outside it. However pleasantly perfect and rounded it may be, it must be given a blow to, it must be burst through and thereby the freedom of light and air be won, and the complete purpose of bird life be achieved. In Sanskrit, the bird has been called the twice-born: so too the man is named, who has gone through the ceremony of the discipline of self-restraint and high thinking for a period of at least twelve years; who has come out simple in wants, pure in heart, and ready to take up all the responsibilities of life in a disinterested largeness of spirit. He is considered to have had his rebirth from the blind envelopment of self to the freedom of soul life; to have come into living relation with his surroundings; to have become at one with the All.

I have already warned my hearers, and must once more warn them against the idea that the teachers of India preached a renunciation of the world and of self which leads only to the blank emptiness of negation. Their aim was the realization of the soul, or, in other words, gaining the world in perfect truth. When Jesus said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' he meant this. He proclaimed the truth that when man gets rid of his pride of self then he comes into his true inheritance. No more has he to fight his way into his position in the world; it is secure for him everywhere by the immortal right of his soul. Pride of self interferes with the proper function of the soul which is to realise itself by perfecting its union with the world and the world's God.

In his sermon to Sadhu Simha Buddha says, *It is true, Simha, !hat I denounce activities, but* only *the activities !hat lead to the evil in words, thoughts, or deeds. It is true, Simha, that I preach extinction, but* only *the extinction of pride, lust, evil thought and ignorance, not that of forgiveness, love, charity; and truth.*

The doctrine of deliverance that Buddha preached was the freedom from the thraldom of *avidyd. Avidyd* is the ignorance that darkens our consciousness, and tends to limit it within the boundaries of our personal self. It is this *avidya*, this ignorance, this limiting of consciousness that creates the hard separateness of the ego, and thus becomes the source of all pride and greed and cruelty incidental to self seeking. When a man sleeps he is shut up within the narrow activities of his physical life. He lives, but he knows not the varied relations of his life to his surroundings; therefore he knows not himself. So when a man lives the life of *Avidya* he is confined within his own self. It is a spiritual sleep; his consciousness is not fully awake to the highest reality that surrounds him, therefore he knows not the reality of his own soul. When he attains *Bodhi, i.e.* the awakenment from the sleep of self to the perfection of consciousness, he becomes Buddha.

Once I met two ascetics of a certain religious sect in a village of Bengal. 'Can you tell me,' I asked them, 'wherein lies the special features of your religion?' One of them hesitated for a moment and answered, 'It is difficult to define that.' The other said, 'No, it is quite simple. We hold that we have first of all to know our own soul under the guidance of our spiritual teacher, and when we have done that eve can find him, who is the Supreme Soul, within us.' 'Why don't you preach your doctrine to all the people of the world?' I asked. 'Whoever feels thirsty will of himself come to the river,' was his reply. 'But then, do you find it so? Are they coming?'The man gave a gentle smile, and with an assurance which had not the least tinge of impatience or anxiety, he said, `They must come, one and all.'

Yes, he is right, this simple ascetic of rural Bengal. Man is indeed abroad to satisfy needs which are more to him than food and clothing. He is out to find himself. Man's history is the history of his journey to the unknown in quest of the realization of his immortal self his soul. Through the rise and fall of empires; through the building up gigantic piles of wealth and the ruthless scattering of them upon the dust; through the creation of vast bodies of symbols that give shape to his dreams and aspirations, and the casting of them away like the playthings of an outworn infancy; through his forging of magic keys with which to unlock the mysteries of creation, and through his throwing away of this labour of ages to go back to his workshop and work up afresh some new form; yes,

through it all man is marching from epoch to epoch towards the fullest realization of his soul,- the soul which is greater than the things man accumulates; the deeds he accomplishes, the theories he builds, the soul whose onward course is never checked by death or dissolution. Man's mistakes and failures have by no means been trifling or small, they have strewn his path with colossal ruins; his sufferings have been immense, like birth-pangs for a giant child; they are the prelude of a fulfilment whose scope is infinite. Man has gone through and is still undergoing martyrdoms in various ways, and his institutions are the altars he has built whereto he brings his daily sacrifices, marvellous in kind and stupendous in quantity. All this would be absolutely unmeaning and unbearable if all along he did not feel that deepest joy of the soul within him, which tries its divine strength by suffering and proves its exhaustless riches by renunciation. Yes, they are coming, the pilgrims, one and all-coming to their true inheritance of the world; they are ever broadening their consciousness, ever seeking a higher and higher unity, ever approaching nearer to one central Truth which is all-comprehensive.

Man's poverty is abysmal, his wants are endless till he becomes truly conscious of his soul. Till then, the world to him is in a state of continual flux-a phantasm that is and is not. For a man who has realised his soul there. is a determinate centre of the universe around which all else can find its proper place, and from thence only can he draw and enjoy the blessedness of a harmonious life.

There was a time when the earth was only a nebulous mass whose particles were scattered far apart through the expanding force of heat; when she had not yet attained her definiteness of form and had neither beauty nor purpose, but only heat and motion. Gradually, when her vapours were condensed into a unified rounded whole through a force that strove to bring all straggling matters under the control of a centre, she occupied her proper place among the planets of the solar system, like an emerald pendant in a necklace of diamonds. So with our soul When the heat and motion of blind impulses and passions distract it on all sides, we can neither give nor receive anything truly. But when we find our centre in our soul by the power of self-restraint, by the force that harmonises all warring elements and unifies those that are apart, then all our isolated impressions reduce themselves to wisdom, and all our momentary impulses of heat find their completion in love; then all the petty details of our life reveal an infinite purpose, and all our thoughts and deeds unite themselves inseparably in an internal harmony.

The Upanishads say with great emphasis. *Know thou the One, the Soul[1] It is the bridge leading to the* immortal *being.*[2]

This is the ultimate end of man, to find the One which is in him; which is his truth, which is his soul; the key with which he opens the gate of the spiritual life, the heavenly kingdom. His desires are many, and madly they run after the varied objects of the world, for therein they have their life and fulfilment. But that which is *one* in him is ever seeking for unity-unity in knowledge, unity in love, unity in purposes of will; its highest joy is when it reaches the infinite one within its eternal unity. Hence the saying of the Upanishad, *Only those of tranquil minds, and none else, can attain abiding joy, by realising within their souls the Being who manifests one essence in a multiplicity of forms*[3]

Through all the diversities of the world the one in us is threading its course towards the one in all; this is its nature and this is its joy. But by that devious path it could never reach its goal if it had not a light of its own by which it could catch in a flash the sight of what it was seeking. The vision of the Supreme One in our own soul is a direct and immediate intuition, not based on any ratiocination or demonstration at all. Our eyes naturally see an object as a whole, not by breaking it up into parts, but by bringing all the parts together into a unity with ourselves. So with the intuition of our Soul-consciousness, which naturally and totally realises its unity in the Supreme One.

Says the Upanishad: This *deity who is manifesting himself in the activities of the universe always dwells in the heart of man as the supreme soul. Those who realise him through the immediate perception of the heart attain immortality.*[4]

He is *Vishvakarma;* that is, in a multiplicity of forms and forces lies his outward manifestation in nature; but his inner manifestation in our soul is that which exists in unity. Our pursuit of truth in the domain of nature therefore is through analysis and the gradual methods of science, but our apprehension of truth in our soul is immediate and through direct intuition. We cannot attain the supreme soul by successive additions of knowledge acquired bit by bit even through all eternity, because he is one, he is not made up of parts; we can only know him as heart of our hearts and soul of our soul; we can only know him in the love and joy we feel when we give up our self and stand before him face to face.

The deepest and the most earnest prayer that has ever risen from the human heart has been uttered in our ancient tongue: *O thou self-revealing one, reveal thyself in me.*[5] We are in misery because we are creatures of self—the self that is unyielding and narrow, that reflects no light, that is blind to the infinite. Our self is loud with its own discordant clamour-is not the tuned harp whose chords vibrate with the music of the eternal. Sighs of discontent and weariness of failure, idle regrets for the past and anxieties for the future are troubling our shallow hearts because we have not found our souls, and the self-revealing spirit has not been manifest within us. Hence our cry, O *thou awful one, save me with thy*

1. Tamevaikam janatha atmanam
2. Amritasyaisha setuh
3. Ekam rupam bahudha ya karoti ** tam atmastham ye anupacyanti dhirah, tesham sukham cacvatam netaresham.
4. Esha devo vishvakarma mahatma sada jananam hridaye sannivishtah. Hrida manisha manasabhiklripto ya etad viduramritaste bhavanti.
5. Aviravirmayedhi.

smile of grace ever and evermore.[1] It is a stilling shroud of death, this self-gratification, this insatiable greed, this pride of possession, this insolent alienation of heart. *Rudra, O thou awful are, rend this dark cover in twain and let the saving beam of thy* smile of grace strike through this night of gloom and waken my soul.

From unreality lead me to the real, from darkness to the light, from death to immortality.[2] But, how can one hope to have this prayer granted? For infinite is the distance that lies between truth and untruth, between death and deathlessness. Yet this measureless gulf is bridged in a moment when the self-revealing one reveals himself in the soul. There the miracle happens, for there is the meeting-ground of the finite and infinite. *Father, completely sweep away all my sins!*[3] For in sin man takes part with the finite against the infinite that is in him. It is the defeat of his soul by his self. It is a perilously losing game, in which man stakes his all to gain a part. Sin is the blurring of truth which clouds the purity of our consciousness. In sin we lust after pleasures, not because they are truly desirable, but because the red light of our passion makes them appear desirable; we long for things not because they are great in themselves, but because our greed exaggerates them and makes them appear great.

These exaggerations, these falsifications of the perspective of things, break the harmony of our life at every step; we lose the true standard of values and are *distracted by* the false claims of the varied interests of life contending with one another. It is this failure to bring all the elements of his nature under the unity and control of the Supreme One that makes man feel the pang of his separation from God and gives rise to the earnest prayer, *O God, O Father; completly sweep away all our sins. Give into us that which is good ,'* the good[4] which is the daily bread of our souls. In our pleasures we are confined to ourselves, in the good we are freed and we belong to all. As the child in its mother's womb gets its sustenance through the union of its life with the larger life of its mother, so our soul is nourished only through the good which is the recognition of its inner kinship, the channel of its communication with the infinite by which it is surrounded and fed. Hence it is said, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' For righteousness is the divine food of the soul; nothing but this car, untruth and unrighteousness hold its reign; and things can come to such a pass that we may cry out in our anguish, 'Such utter lawlessness could never prevail if there were a God!' Indeed, God has stood aside from our self, where his watchful patience knows no bounds, and where he never forces open the doors if shut against him. For this self of ours has to attain its ultimate meaning, which is the soul, not through the compulsion of God's power but through love, and thus become united with God in freedom.

He whose spirit has been made one with God stands before man as the supreme flower of humanity. There man finds in truth what he is; for there the *Avih* is revealed to him in the soul of man as the most perfect revelation for him of God; for there we see the union of the supreme will with our will, our love with the love everlasting.

Therefore, in our country he who truly loves God receives such homage from men as would be considered almost sacrilegious in the West. We see in him God's wish fulfilled, the most difficult of all obstacles to his revealment removed, and God's own perfect joy fully blossoming in humanity. Through him we find the whole world of man overspread with a divine homeliness. His life, burning with God's love, makes all our earthly love resplendent. All the intimate associations of our life, all its experience of pleasure and pain, group themselves around this display of the divine love, and form the drama that we witness in him. The touch of an infinite mystery passes over the trivial and the familiar, making it break out into ineffable music. The trees and the stars and the blue hills appear to us as symbols aching with a meaning which can never be uttered in words. We seem to watch the Master in the very act of creation of a new world when a man's soul draws her heavy curtain of self aside, when her veil is lifted and she is face to face with her eternal lover.

But what is this state? It is like a morning of spring, varied in its life and beauty, yet one and entire. When a man's life rescued from distractions finds its unity in the soul, then the consciousness of the infinite becomes at once direct and natural to it as the light is to the flame. All the conflicts and contradictions of life are reconciled; knowledge, love, and action harmonized; pleasure and pain become one in beauty; enjoyment and renunciation equal in goodness; the breach between the finite and the infinite fills with love and overflows; every moment carries its message of the eternal: the formless appears to us in the form of the flower, of the fruit; the boundless takes us up in his arms as a father and walks by our side as a friend. It is only the soul, the one in man which by its very nature can overcome all limits, and finds its affinity with the Supreme One. While yet we have not attained the internal harmony, and the wholeness of our being, our life remains a life of habits. The world still appears to us as a machine, to be mastered where it is useful, to be guarded against where it is dangerous, and never to be known in its full fellowship with us alike in its physical nature and in its spiritual life and beauty.

1. Rudra yat te dakshinam mukham tena mam pahi nityam.
2. Asatoma sadgamaya, tamasoma jyotirgamaya,
   mrityorma mritangamaya.
3. Vishvanideva savitar duritani parasuva.
4. Yad bhadram tanna asuv.

The Problem of Evil

THE question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or, in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, Why are we?

But this is the real question we ought to ask: Is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate? The river has its boundaries, its banks, but is a river all banks? or are the banks the final facts about the river? Do not these obstructions themselves give its water an onward motion? The towing rope binds a boat, but is the bondage its meaning? Does it not at the same time draw the boat forward?

The current of the world has its boundaries, otherwise it could have no existence, but its purpose is not shown in the boundaries which restrain it, but in its movement, which is towards perfection. The wonder is not that there should be obstacles and sufferings in this world, but that there should be law and order, beauty and joy, goodness and love. The idea of God that man has in his being is the wonder of all wonders. fie has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect; just as a man who has an ear for music realises the perfection of a song, while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes. Man has found out the great paradox that what is limited is not imprisoned within its limits; it is ever moving, and therewith shedding its finitude every moment. In fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness; finitude is not contradictory to infinity: they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinite revealed within bounds.

Pain, which is the feeling of our finiteness, is not a fixture in our life. It is not an end in self, as joy is. To meet with it is to know that it has no part in the true permanence of creation. It is what error is in our intellectual life. To go through the history of the development of science is to go through the maze of mistakes it made current at different times. Yet no one really believes that science is the one perfect mode of disseminating mistakes. The progressive ascertainment of truth is the important thing to remember in the history of science, not its innumerable mistakes. Error, by its nature, cannot be stationary; it cannot remain with truth; like a tramp, it must quit its lodging as soon as it fails to pay its score to the full.

As in intellectual error, so in evil of any other form, its essence is impermanence, for it cannot accord with the whole Every moment it is being corrected by the totality of things and keeps changing its aspect. We exaggerate its importance by imagining it as at a standstill. Could we collect the statistics of the immense amount of death and putrefaction happening every moment in this earth, they would appal us. But evil is ever moving; with all its incalculable immensity it does not effectually clog the current of our life; and we find that the earth, water, and air remain sweet and pure for living beings. All such statistics consist of our attempts to represent statically what is in motion; and in the process things assume a weight in our mind which they have not in reality. For this reason a man, who by his profession is concerned with any particular aspect of life, is apt to magnify its proportions; in laying undue stress upon facts he loses his hold upon truth. A detective may have the opportunity of studying crimes in detail, but he loses his sense of their relative place in the whole social economy. When science collects facts to illustrate the struggle for existence that is going on in the animal kingdom, it raises a picture in our minds of nature red in tooth and claw.' But in these mental pictures we give a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent. It is like calculating the weight of the air on each square inch of our body to prove that it must be crushingly heavy for us. With every weight, however, there is an adjustment, and we lightly bear our burden. With the struggle for existence in nature there is reciprocity. There is the love for children and for comrades; there is the sacrifice of self, which springs from love; and this love is the positive element in life.

If we kept the search-light of our observation.turned upon the fact of death, the world would appear to us like a huge chancel-house; but in the world of life the thought of death has, we find, the least possible hold upon our minds. Not because it is the least apparent, but because it is the negative aspect of life; just as, in spite of the fact that we shut our eyelids every second, it is the openings of the eyes that count. Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances and plays., it builds, hoards and loves in death's face. Only when we detach one individual fact of death do we see its blankness and become dismayed. We lose sight of the wholeness of a life of which death is part. It is like looking at a piece of cloth through a microscope. It appears like a net; we gaze at the big holes and shiver in imagination. But the truth is, death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black, as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence, just as the sky does not leave its stain upon the wings of the bird.

When we watch a child trying to walk, we see its countless failures; its successes are but few. If we had to limit our observation within a narrow space of time, the sight would be cruel. But we find that in spite of its repeated failures there is an impetus of joy in the child which sustains it in its seemingly impossible task. We see it does not think of its falls so much as of its power to keep its balance though for only a moment.

Like these accidents in a child's attempts to walk, we meet with sufferings in various forms in our life every day, showing the imperfections in our knowledge and our available power, and in the application of our will. But if these revealed our weakness to us only, we should die of utter depression. When we select for observation a limited area of our activities, our individual failures and miseries loom large in our minds; but our life leads us instinctively to take a wider view. It gives us an ideal of perfection which ever carries us beyond our present limitations. Within us we have a hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experiences; it is the

undying faith in the infinite in us; it will never accept any of our disabilities as a permanent fact; it sets no limit to its own scope; it dares to assert that man has oneness with God; and its wild dreams become true every day.

We see the truth when we set our mind towards the infinite. The ideal of truth is not in the narrow present, not in our immediate sensations, but in the consciousness of the whole which gives us a taste of what we *should* have in what we do have. Consciously or unconsciously we have in our life this feeling of Truth which is ever lamer than its appearance; for our life is facing the infinite, and it is in movement. Its aspiration is therefore infinitely more than its achievement, and as it goes on it finds that no realization of truth ever leaves it stranded on the desert of finality, but carries it to a region beyond. Evil cannot altogether arrest the course of life on the highway and rob it of its possessions. For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good; it cannot stand and give battle to the All. If the least evil could stop anywhere indefinitely, it would sink deep and cut into the very roots of existence. As it is, man does not really believe in evil, just as he cannot believe that violin strings have been, purposely made to create the exquisite torture of discordant notes, though by the aid of statistics is can be mathematically proved that the probability of discord is far greater than that of harmony, and for one who can play the violin there are thousands who cannot. The potentiality of perfection outweighs actual contradictions. No doubt there have been people who asserted existence to be an absolute evil, but man can never take them seriously. Their pessimism is a mere pose, either intellectual or sentimental, but life itself is optimistic: it wants to go on. Pessimism is a form of mental dipsomania, it disdains healthy nourishment, indulges in the strong drink of denunciation, and creates an artificial dejection which thirsts for a stronger draught. If existence were an evil, it would wait for no philosopher to prove it. It is like convicting a man of suicide, while all the time he stands before you in the flesh. Existence itself is here to prove that it cannot be an evil.

An imperfection which is not all imperfection, but which has perfection for its ideal, must go through a perpetual realization. Thus, it is the function of our intellect to realise the truth through untruths, and knowledge is nothing but the continually burning up of error to set free the light of truth. Our will, our character, has to attain perfection by continually overcoming evils, either inside or outside us, or both; our physical life is consuming bodily materials every moment to maintain the life fire; and our moral life too has its fuel to burn. This life process is going on-we know it, we have felt it; and we have a faith which no individual instances to the contrary can shake, that the direction of humanity is from evil to good. For we feel that good is the positive element in man's nature, and in every age and every clime what man values most is his ideal of goodness. We have known the good, we have loved it, and we have paid our highest reverence to men who have shown in their lives what goodness is.

The question will be asked, What is goodness; what does our moral nature mean? My answer is, that when a man begins to have an extended vision of his true self, when he realises that he is much more than at present he seems to be, he begins to get conscious of his moral nature. Then he grows aware of that which he is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under his direct experience. Necessarily, his perspective of life changes, and his will takes the place of his wishes. For will is the supreme wish of the larger life, the life whose greater portion is out of our present reach, whose objects are not for the most part before our sight.Then comes the, conflict of our lesser man with our greater man, of our wishes with our will, of, the desire for things affecting our senses with the purpose that is within our heart. Then we begin to distinguish between what we immediately desire and what is good. For good is that which is desirable for our greater self. Thus the sense of goodness comes out of a truer view of our life, which is the connected view of the wholeness of the field of life, and which takes into account not only what is present before us but what is not, and perhaps never humanly can be. Man, who is provident, feels for that life of his which is not yet existent, feels much more for that than for the life that is with him; therefore he is ready to sacrifice his present inclination for the unrealised future. In this he becomes great, for he realises truth. Even to be efficiently selfish a man has to recognize this truth, and has to curb his immediate impulses-in other words, has to be moral. For our moral faculty is the faculty by which we know that life is not made up of fragments, purposeless and discontinuous. This moral sense of man not only gives him the power to see that the self has a continuity in time, but it also enables him to see that he is not true when he is only restricted to his own self. He is more in truth than he is in fact. He truly belongs to individuals who are not included in his own individuality, and whom he is never even likely to know. As he has a feeling for-his future self which is outside his present consciousness, so he has a feeling for his greater self which is outside the limits of his personality. There is no man who has not this feeling to some extent, who has never sacrificed his selfish desire for the sake of some other person, who has never felt a pleasure in undergoing some loss or trouble because it pleased somebody else. It is a truth that man is not a detached being, that he has a universal aspect; and when he recognizes this, he becomes great. Even the most evilly-disposed selfishness has to recognize this when he seeks the power to do evil; for it cannot ignore truth and yet be strong. So in order to claim the aid of truth, selfishness has to be unselfish to some extent. A band of robbers must be moral in order to hold together as a band; they may rob the whole world but not each other. To make an immoral intention successful, some of its weapons must be moral. In fact, very often it is our very moral strength which gives us most effectively the power to do evil, to exploit other individuals for our own benefit, to rob other people of their just rights. The life of an animal is unmoral, for it is aware only of an immediate present; the life of a man can be immoral, but that only means that it must

have a moral basis. What is immoral is imperfectly moral just as what is false is true to a small extent, or it cannot be false. Not to see is to be blind, but to see wrongly is to see only in an imperfect manner. Man's selfishness is a beginning to see some connection, some purpose in life; and to act in accordance with its dictates requires self-restraint and regulation of conduct. A selfish man willingly undergoes troubles for the sake of the self, he suffers hardship and privation without a murmur, simply because he knows that what is pain and trouble, looked at from the point of view of a short space of time, is just the opposite when seen in a larger perspective. Thus what is a loss to the smaller man is a gain to the greater, and vice versa.

To the man who lives for an idea, for his country, for the good of humanity, life has an extented meaning, and to that extent pain becomes important to him. To live the life of goodness is to live the life of all. Pleasure is for one's own self, but goodness is concerned with the happiness of all humanity and for all time. Front the point of view of the good, pleasure and pain appear in a different meaning; so much so, that pleasure may be shunned, and pain be courted in its place, and death itself be made welcome as giving a higher value to life. From these higher standpoints of a man's life, the standpoints of the good, pleasure and pain lose their absolute value. Martyrs prove it in history, and we prove it every day in our life in our little martyrdoms. When we take a pitcherful of water from the sea it has its weight, but when we take a dip into the sea itself a thousand pitchersful of water flow above our head, and we do not feel their weight. We have to carry the pitcher of self with our strength; and so, while on the plane of selfishness pleasure and pain have their full weight, on the moral plane they are so much lightened that the man who has reached it appears to us almost super-human in his patience under crushing trials, and his forbearance in the face of malignant persecution.

To live in perfect goodness is to realise one's life in the infinite. This is the most comprehensive view of life which we can have by our inherent power of the moral vision of the wholeness of life. And the teaching of Buddha is to cultivate this moral power to the highest extent, to know that our field of activities is not bound to the plane of our narrow self. This is the vision of the heavenly kingdom of Christ. When we attain to that universal life, which is the moral life, we become free from bonds of pleasure and pain, and the place vacated by our self becomes filled with an unspeakable joy which springs from measureless love. In this state the soul's activity is all the more heightened, only its motive power is not from desires, but in its own joy. This is the *Karmayoga of* the Gita, the way to become one with the infinite activity by the exercise of the activity of disinterested goodness.

When Buddha meditated upon. the way of releasing mankind from the grip of misery he came to this truth: that when man attains his highest end by merging the individual in the universal, he becomes free from the thraldom of pain. Let us consider this point more fully.

A student of mine once related to me his adventure in a storm, and complained that all the time he was troubled with the feeling that this great commotion in nature behaved to him as if he were no more than a mere handful of dust. That he was a distinct personality with a will of his own had not the least influence upon what was happening.

I said, 'If consideration for our individuality could sway nature from her path, then it would be the individuals who would suffer most.'

But he persisted in his doubt, saying that there was this fact which could not be ignored-the feeling that I am. The 'I' in us seeks for a relation which is individual to it.

I replied that the relation of the 'I' is with something which is 'not' So we must have a medium which is common to both, and we must be absolutely certain that it is the same to the 'I' as it is to the 'not-I'.

This is what needs repeating here. We have to keep in mind that our individuality by its nature is impelled to seek for the universal. Our body can only die if it tries to eat its own substance, and our eye loses the meaning of its function if it can only see itself.

Just as we find that the stronger the imagination the less is it merely imaginary and the more is it in harmony with truth, so we see the more vigorous our individuality the more does it widen towards the universal. For the greatness of a personality is not in itself but in its content, which is universal, just as the depth of a lake is judged not by the size of its cavity but by the depth of its water.

So, if it is a truth that the yearning of our nature is for reality, and that our personality cannot be happy with a fantastic universe of its own creation, then it is clearly best for it that our will can only deal with things by following their law, and cannot do with them just as it pleases. This unyielding sureness of reality sometimes crosses our will, and very often leads us to disaster, just as the firmness of the earth invariably hurts the falling child who is learning to walk. Nevertheless it is the same firmness that hurts him which makes his walking possible. Once, while passing under a bridge, the mast of my boat got stuck in one of its girders. If only for a moment the mast would have bent an inch or two, or the bridge raised its back like a yawning cat, or the river given in, it would have been all right with me. But they took no notice of my helplessness. That is the very reason why I could make use of the river, and sail upon it with the help of the mast, and that is why, when its current was inconvenient, I could rely upon the bridge. Things are what they are, and we have to know them if we would deal with them, and knowledge of there is possible because our wish is not their law. This knowledge is a Joy to us, for the knowledge is one of the channels of our relation with the things outside its; it is making them our own, and thus widening the limit of our self.

At ever- step we have to take into account others than ourselves. For only in death are we alone. A poet is a true poet when he can make his personal idea joyful to all men,

which he could not do if he had not a medium common to all his audience. This common language has its own law which the poet must discover and follow, by doing which he becomes true and attains poetical immortality.

We see then that man's individuality is not his highest truth; there is that in him which is universal. If he were made to live in a world where his own self was the only factor to consider, they. that would be the worst prison imaginable to him, for man's deepest joy is in growing greater and greater by more and more union with the all. This, as we have seen, would be an impossibility if there were no law common to all. Only by discovering the law and following it, do we become great, do we realise the universal; while, so long as our individual desires are at conflict with the universal law, we suffer pain and are futile.

There was a time when we prayed for special concessions, we expected that the laws of nature should be held in abeyance for our own convenience. But now we know better. We know that law cannot be set aside, and in this knowledge we have become strong. For this law is not something apart from its; it is our own. The universal power which is manifested in the universal law is one with our own power. It will thwart its where we are small, where we are against the current of things; but it will help its where we are great, where we are in unison with the all. Thus, through the help of science, as we come to know snore of the laws of nature, we gain in power; we tend to attain a universal body. Our organ of sight, our organ of locomotion, our physical strength becomes world-wide; steam and electricity become our nerve and muscle. Thus we find that, just as throughout our bodily organization there is a principle of relation by. virtue of which we can call the entire body our own, and can use it as such, so all through the universe there is that principle of uninterrupted relation by virtue of which we can call the whole world our extended body and use it accordingly. And in this age of science it is our endeavour fully to establish our claim to our worldself. We know all our poverty and sufferings are owing to our inability to realise this legitimate claim of ours. Really, there is no limit to our powers, for we are not outside the universal power which is the expression of universal law. We are on our way, to overcome disease and death, to conquer pain and poverty; for through scientific knowledge we are ever on our way to realise the universal in its physical aspect. And as we make progress we find pain, disease, and poverty of power are not absolute, but that it is only the want of adjustment of our individual self to oar universal self which gives rise to them.

It is the same with our spiritual life. When the individual man in us chafes against the lawful rule of the universal man we become morally small, and we must suffer. In such a condition our successes are our greatest failures, and the very fulfilment of our desires leaves us poorer. We hanker after special gains for ourselves, we want to enjoy privileges which none else can share with us. But everything that is absolutely special must keep tip a perpetual warfare with what is general. In such a state of civil war man always lives behind barricades, and in any civilization which is selfish our homes are not real homes, but artificial barriers around us. Yet we complain that we are not happy, as if there were something inherent in the nature of things to make us miserable. The universal spirit is waiting to crown us with happiness, but our individual spirit would not accept it. It is our life of the self that causes conflicts and complications everywhere, upsets the normal balance of society and gives rise to miseries of all kinds. It brings things to such a pass that to maintain order we have to create artificial coercions and organized forms of tyranny, and tolerate infernal institutions is our midst, whereby at every moment. humanity is humiliated.

We have seen that in order to be powerful we have to submit to the laws of the universal forces, and to realise in practice that they are our own. So, in order to be happy, we have to submit our individual will to the sovereignty of the universal will, and to feel in truth that it is our own will. When we reach that state wherein the adjustment of the finite in us to the infinite is made perfect, then pain itself becomes a valuable asset. It becomes a measuring rod with which to gauge the true value of our joy.

The most important lesson that man can learn from his life is not that there is pain in this world, but that it depends upon him to turn it into good account, that it is possible for him to transmute it into joy. That lesson has not been lost altogether to us, and there is no man living who would willingly be deprived of his right to suffer pain, for that is his right to be a man. one day the wife of a poor labourer complained bitterly to me that her eldest boy was going to be sent away to a rich relative's house for part of the year. It was the implied kind intention of trying to relieve her of her trouble that gave her the shock, for a mother's trouble is a mother's own by her inalienable right of love, and she was not going to surrender it to any dictates of expediency. Man's freedom is never in being saved troubles, but it is the freedom to take trouble for his own good, to make the trouble an element in his joy. It can be made so only when we realise that our individual self is not the highest meaning of our being, that in us we have the world-man who is immortal, who is not afraid of death or sufferings, and who looks upon pain as only the other side of joy. He who has realised this knows that it is pain which is our true wealth as imperfect beings, and has made its great and worthy to take our seat with the perfect. He knows that we are not beggars; that it is the hard coin which must be paid for everything valuable in this life, for our power, our wisdom, our love; that in pain is symbolised the infinite possibility of perfection, the eternal unfolding of joy; and the man who loses all pleasure in accepting pain sinks down and down to the lowest depth of penury and degradation. It is only when we invoke the aid of pain for our self-gratification that she becomes evil and takes her vengeance for the insult done to her by hurling us into misery. For she is the vestal virgin consecrated to the service of the immortal perfection, and when she takes her true place before the altar of the infinite she casts off her dark veil and bares her face to the beholder as a revelation of supreme joy.

The Problem of Self

AT one pole of my being I am one with stocks and stones. There I have to acknowledge the rule of universal law. That is where the foundation of my existence lies, deep down below. Its strength lies in its being held firm in the clasp of the comprehensive world, and in the fullness of its community with all things.

But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. There I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable. The whole weight of the universe cannot crush out this individuality of mine. I maintain it in spite of the tremendous gravitation of all things. It is small in appearance but great in reality. For it holds its own against the forces that would rob it of its distinction and make it one with the dust.

This is the superstructure of the self which rises from the indeterminate depth and darkness of its foundation into the open, proud of its isolation, proud of having given shape to a single individual idea of the architect's which has no duplicate in the whole. universe. If this individuality be demolished then though no material be lost, not an atom destroyed the creative joy which was crystallised therein is gone. We are absolutely bankrupt if we are deprived of this speciality, this individuality, which is the only thing we can call our own; and which, if lost, is also a loss to the whole world. It is most valuable because it is not universal. And therefore only through it can we gain the universe more truly than if we were lying within its breast unconscious of our distinctiveness. The universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique. And the desire we have to keep our uniqueness intact is really the desire of the universe acting in us. it is our joy of the infinite in us that gives its our joy in ourselves.

That this separateness of self is considered by man as his most precious possession is proved by the sufferings he undergoes and the sins he commits for its sake. But the consciousness of separation has come from the eating of the fruit of knowledge. It has led man to shame and crime and death; yet it is dearer to him than any paradise where the self lies, securely slumbering in perfect innocence in the womb of mother nature.

It is a constant striving and suffering for us to maintain the separateness of this self of ours. And in fact it is this suffering which measures its value. One side of the value is sacrifice, which represents how much the cost has been. The other side of it is the attainment, which represents how much has been gained. If the self meant nothing to us but pain and sacrifice, it could have no value for us, and on no account would we willingly undergo such sacrifice. In such case there could be no doubt at all that the highest object of humanity would be the annihilation of self.

But if there is a corresponding gain, if it does not end in a void but in a fullness, then it is clear that its negative qualities, its very sufferings and sacrifices, make it all the more precious. That it is so has been proved by those who have realised the positive significance of self, and have accepted its responsibilities with eagerness and undergone sacrifices without flinching.

With the foregoing introduction it will be easy for me to answer the question once asked by one of my audience as to whether the annihilation of self was not been held by India as the supreme goal of humanity?

In the first place we must keep in mind the fact that man is never literal in the expression of his ideas, except in matters most trivial. Very often man's words are not a language at all, but merely a local gesture of the dumb. They may indicate, but do not express his thoughts. The more vital his thoughts the more have his words to be explained by the context of his life. Those who seek to know his meaning by the aid of the dictionary only technically reach the house, for they are stopped by the outside wall and find no entrance to the hall. This is the reason why the teachings of our greater prophets give rise to endless disputations when we try to understand them by following their words and not by realising them in our own lives. The men who are cursed with the gift of the literal mind are the unfortunate ones who are always busy with the nets and neglect the fishing.

It is not only in Buddhism and the Indian religion but in Christianity too, that the ideal of selflessness is preached with all fervour. In the last the symbol of death has been used for expressing the idea of man's deliverance from the life which is not true. This is the same as Nirvana, the symbol of the extinction of the lamp.

In the typical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from *avidya*, from ignorance. It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstructs our vision of truth. When this obstruction, which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eye lid drawn up which is no loss to the eye.

It is our ignorance which makes us think that our self, as self, is real, that it has its complete meaning in itself. When we take that wrong view of self then we try to live in such a manner as to make self the ultimate object of our life. Then are we doomed to disappointment like the man who tries to reach his destination by firmly clutching the dust of the road. Our self has no means of holding its, for its own nature is to pass on; and by clinging to this thread of self which is passing through the loom of life we cannot make it serve the purpose of the cloth into. which it is being woven. When a man, with elaborate care, arranges for an enjoyment of the self, he lights a fire but has no dough to make his bread with; the fire flares up and consumes itself to extinction, like an unnatural beast that eats its own progeny and dies.

In an unknown language the. words are tyrannically

prominent. They stop us but say nothing. To be rescued from this fetter of words we must rid ourselves of the *avidya*, our ignorance, and then our mind will find its freedom in the inner idea. But it could be foolish to say that our ignorance of the language can be dispelled only by the destruction of the words. No, when the perfect knowledge comes, every word remains in its place, only they do not bird us to themselves, but let us pass through them and lead us to the idea which is emancipation.

Thus it is only *avidya* which makes the self our fetter by making us think that it is an end in itself, and by preventing our seeing that it contains the idea that transcends its limits. That is why the wise man comes and says, 'Set yourselves free from the *avidya;* know your true soul and be saved from the grasp of the self which imprisons you.'

We gain our freedom when we attain our truest nature. The man who is an artist finds his artistic freedom when he finds his ideal of art. Then is he freed from laborious attempts at imitation, from the goadings of popular approbation. It is the function of religion not to destroy our nature but to fulfil it.

The Sanskrit word *dharma* which is usually translated into English as religion has a deeper meaning in our language.*Dharma is* the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth, of all things. *Dharma* is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self. When any wrong is done we say that *dharma* is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature.

But this *dharma,* which is the truth in us, is not apparent, because it is inherent. So much so, that it has been held that sinfulness is the nature of man, and only by the special grace of God can a particular person be saved. This is like saying that the nature of the seed is to remain enfolded within its shell, and it is only by some special miracle that it can be grown into a tree. But do we not know that the appearance of the seed contradicts its true nature. When you submit it to chemical analysis you may find in it carbon and protein and a good many other things, but not the idea of a branching tree. Only when the tree begins to take shape do you come to see its *dharma,* and then you can affirm without doubt that the seed which has been wasted and allowed to rot in the grounds has been thwarted in its *dharma,* in the fulfilment of its true nature. In the history of humanity we have known the living seed in us to sprout. We have seen the great purpose in us taking shape in the lives of our greatest men, and have felt certain that though there are numerous individual lives that seem ineffectual, still it is not their *dharma* to remain barren; but it is for them to burst their cover and transform themselves into a vigorous spiritual shoot, growing up into the air and light, and branching out in all directions.

The freedom of the seed is in the attainment of its *dharma*, its nature and destiny of becoming a tree; it is the non-accomplishment which is its prison. The sacrifice by which a thing attains its fulfilment is not a sacrifice which ends in death; it is the casting-off of bonds which wins freedom.

When we know the highest ideal of freedom which a man has, we know his *dharma*, the essence of his nature, the real meaning of his self. At first sight it seems that man counts that as freedom by which he gets unbounded opportunities of self-gratification and self-aggrandizement. But surely this is not borne out by history. Our revelatory men have always been those who have lived the life of self-sacrifice. The higher nature in man always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is man's *dharma*, man's religion, and man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar.

We can look at our self in its two different aspects. The self which displays itself, and the self which transcends itself and thereby reveals its own meaning. To display itself it tries to be big, to stand upon the pedestal of its accumulations, and to retain everything to itself. To reveal itself it gives up everything it has, thus becoming perfect like a flower that has blossomed out from the bud, pouring from its chalice of beauty all its sweetness.

The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus is it separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its find of oil to feed the flame.

Such a lamp is our self. So long as it hoards its possessions it keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose. When it finds illumination it forgets itself in a moment, holds the light high, and serves it with everything it has; for Therein is its revelation. This revelation is the freedom which Buddha preached. He asked the lamp to give up its oil. But purposeless giving up is a still darker poverty which he never could have meant. The lamp must give up its oil to the light and thus set free the purpose it has in its hoarding. This is emancipation. The path Buddha pointed out was not merely the practice of self-abnegation, but the widening of love. And therein lies the true meaning of Buddha's preaching.

When we find tha*t* the state of *Nirvana* preached by Buddha is through love, then we know for certain that *Nirvana is* the highest culmination of love. For love is an end unto itself. Everything else raises the question 'Why?' in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, 'I love,' then there is no room for the 'why'; it is the final answer in itself.

Doubtless, even selfishness impels one to give away. But the selfish man does it on compulsion. That is like plucking

1. 'Svabhaviki jnana bala kriyacha.'
2. Anandadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante,
anandena jatani jivanti,
anandamprayantyabhisamvicanti.

fruit when it is unripe; you have to tear it from the tree and bruise the branch. But when a man loves, giving becomes a matter of joy to him, like the tree's surrender of the ripe fruit. All our-belongings assume a weight by the ceaseless gravitation of our selfish desires; we cannot easily cast them away from us. They seem to belong to our very nature, stick to us as a second skin, and we bleed as we detach them. But when we are possessed by love, its force acts in the opposite direction. The things that closely adhered to us lose their adhesion and weight, and we find that they are not of us. Far from being a loss to give them away, we find in that the fulfilment of our nature.

Thus we find in perfect love the freedom of our self. That only which is done for love is done freely, however much pain it may cause. Therefore working for love is freedom in action. This is the meaning of the teaching of disinterested work in the Gita.

The Gita says action we must have, for only in action do we manifest our nature. But this manifestation is not perfect so long as our action is not free. In fact, our nature is obscured by work done by the compulsion of want or fear. The mother reveals herself in the service of her children, to our true freedom is not the freedom from action but freedom in action, which can only be attained in the work of love.

God's manifestation is in his work of creation, and it is said in the Upanishad, *Knowledge, power, and action are of his nature[1]'* they are not imposed upon him from outside. Therefore his work is his freedom, and in his creation he realises himself. The same thing is said elsewhere in other words: *From joy does spring all this creation, by joy is it maintained, towards joy does it progress, and into joy does it enter[2] This* means that God's creation has not its source in any necessity; it comes from his fullness of joy; it is his love that creates, therefore in creation is his own revealment.

The artist who has a joy in the fullness of his artistic idea objectifies its and thus gains it more fully by holding it afar. It is joy which detaches ourselves from us, and then gives it form in creations of love in order tomake it more perfectly our own. Hence there must be this separation, not a separation of repulsion but a separation of love. Repulsion has only the one element, the element of severance. But love has two, the element of severance, which is only an appearance, and the element of union which is the ultimate truth. just as when the father tosses his child up from his arms it has the appearance of rejection but its truth is quite the reverse.

So we must know that the meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God and others, but in the ceaseless realization of yoga, of union; not on the side of the. canvas where it is blank, but on the side where the picture is being painted.

This is the reason why the separateness of our self has been described by our philosophers as *maya*, as an illusion, because it has no intrinsic reality of its own. It looks perilous; it raises its isolation to a giddy height and casts a black shadow upon the fair face of existence; from the outside it has an aspect of a sudden disruption, rebellious and destructive; it is proud, domineering and wayward, it is ready to rob the world of all its wealth to gratify its craving of a moment; to pluck with a reckless, cruel hand all the plumes from the divine bird of beauty to deck its ugliness for a day; indeed man's legend has it that it bears the black mark of disobedience stamped on its forehead for ever; but still all this is *maya*, envelopment of *avidya* it is the mist, it is not the sun; it is the black smoke that presages the fire of love.

Imagine some savage who, in his ignorance, thinks that it is the paper of the banknote that has the magic, by virtue of which the possessor of it gets all he wants. He piles up the papers, hides them, handles them in all sorts of absurd ways, and then at last, wearied by his efforts, cones to the sad conclusion that they are absolutely worthless, only fit to be thrown into the fire. But the wise man, knows that the paper of the banknote is all *maya*, and until it is given up to the bank it is futile. It is only *avidya*, our ignorance, that makes us believe that the separateness of our self like the paper of the banknote is precious in itself, and by acting on this belief our self is rendered valueless. It is only when the *avidya* is removed that this very self comes to us with a wealth which is priceless. For *He manifests Himself in deathless forms which His joy* assumes.[1] These forms are separate from Him, and the value that these forms have is only what his joy has imparted to them. When we transfer back these forms into that original joy, which is love, then we cash them in the bank and we find their truth.

When pure necessity drives man to his work it takes an accidental and contingent character, it becomes a mere makeshift arrangement; it is deserted and left in ruins when necessity changes its course. But when his work is the outcome of joy, the forms that it takes have the elements of immortality. The immortal in man imparts to it its own quality of permanence.

Our self, as a form of God's joy, is deathless. For his *joy is amritam,* eternal. This it is in us which makes us sceptical of death, even when the fact of death cannot be doubted. In reconcilement of this contradiction in us we come to the truth that in the dualism of death and life there is a harmony. We know that the life of a soul, which is finite in its expression and infinite in its principle, must go through the portals of death in its journey to realise the infinite. It is death which is monistic, it has no life in it. But life is dualistic; it has an appearance as well as truth; and death is that appearance, that maya, which is an inseparable companion to life. Our self to live must go through a continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual death and a continual life going on at the same time. It is really courting death when we refuse to accept death; when, we wish to give the form of the self some fixed changelessness; when the self feels no impulse which urges it to grow out of itself; when it treats its limits as final and acts accordingly. Then comes our teacher's

1. Anandarupamamritam yadvibhati.

call to die to this death; not a call to annihilation but so eternal life. It is the extinction of the lamp in the morning light; not the abolition of the sun. It is really asking us consciously to give effect to the innermost wish that we have in the depths of our nature.

We have a dual set of desires in our being, which it should be our endeavour to bring into a harmony. In the region of our physical nature we have one set of which we are conscious always. We wish to enjoy our food and drink, we hanker after bodily pleasure and comfort. These desires are self-centred; they are solely concerned with their respective impulses.The wishes of our palate often run counter to what our stomach can allow.

But we have another set, which is the desire of our physical system as a whole, of which we are usually unconscious. It is the wish for health. This is always doing its work, mending and repairing, making new adjustments in cases of accident, and skilfully restoring the balance wherever disturbed. It has no concern with the fulfilment of our immediate bodily desires, but it goes beyond the present time. It is the principle of our physical wholeness, it links our life with its past and its future and maintains the unity of its parts. He who is wise knows it, and makes his other physical wishes harmonise with it.

We have a greater body which is the social body. Society is an organism, of which we as parts have our individual wishes. 'We want our own pleasure and licence. We want to pay less and gain more than anybody else. This causes scramblings and fights. But there is that other wish in us which does its work in the depths of the social being. It is the wish for the welfare of the society. It transcends the limits of the present and the personal, It is on the side of the infinite.

He who is wise tries to harmonise the wishes that seek for selfgratification with the wish for the social good, and only thus can he realise his higher self.

In its finite aspect the self is conscious of its separateness, and there it is ruthless in its attempt to have more distinction than. all others. But in its infinite aspect its wish is to gain that harmony which leads to its perfection and not its mere aggrandizement.

The emancipation of our physical nature is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness, and of our self in attaining love. This last is what Buddha describes as extinction-the extinction of selfishness. This is the function of love, and it does not lead to darkness but to illumination. This is the attainment of *bodhi,* or the true awakening; it is the revealing in us of the infinite joy by the light of love.

The passage of our self is through its selfhood, which is independent, to its attainment of soul, which is harmonious. This harmony can never be reached through compulsion. So our will, in the history of its growth, must come through independence and rebellion to the ultimate completion. We must have the possibility of the negative form of freedom, which is licence, before we can attain the positive freedom, which is love.

This negative freedom, the freedom of self-will, can turn its back upon its highest realization, but it cannot cut itself away from it altogether, for then it will lose its own meaning. Our self-will has freedom up to a certain extent; it can know what it is to break away from the path, but it cannot continue in that direction indefinitely. For we are finite on our negative side. We must come to an end in our evil doing, in our career of discord. For evil is not infinite, and discord cannot be an end in itself. Our will has freedom in order that it may find out that its true course is towards goodness and love. For goodness and love are infinite, and only in the infinite is the perfect realization of freedom possible. So our will can. be free not towards the limitations of our self, not where it is *maya* and negation, but towards the unlimited, where is truth and love. Our freedom cannot go against its own principle of freedom and yet be free; it cannot commit suicide and yet live. We .cannot say that we should have infinite freedom to fetter ourselves, for the fettering ends the freedom.

So in the freedom of our will. we have the same dualism of appearance and truth-our self-will is only the appearance of freedom and love is the truth. When we try to make this appearance independent of truth, then our attempt brings misery and proves its own futility in the end. Everything has this dualism of *maya* and *satyam,* appearance and truth. Words are *maya where they* are merely sounds and finite, they are *satyam* where they are ideas and infinite. Our self is *maya* where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is *satyam* where it recognizes its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in *paramdtman.* This is what Christ means when he says, 'Before Abraham was I am.' This is the eternal I *am* that speaks through the *I am* that is in me. The individual I am attains its perfect end when it realises its freedom of harmony in the infinite I *am.* Then is its *mukti*, its deliverance from the thraldom of *maya*, of appearance which springs from *avidya*, from ignorance; its emancipation in *cantam civam advaitam*, in the perfect repose in truth, in the perfect activity in goodness, and in the perfect union in love.

Not only in our self but also in nature is there this separateness from God, which has been described as *maya* by our philosophers, because the separateness does not exist by itself, it does not limit God's infinity from outside. It is his own will that has imposed limits to itself, just as the chess-player restricts his will with regard to the moving of the chessmen. The player willingly enters into definite relations with each particular piece and realises the joy of his power by these very restrictions. It is not that he cannot move the chessmen just as he pleases, but if he does so then there can be no play. If God assumes his role of omnipotence, then his creation is at an end and his power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits. God's water must be water, his earth can never be other than earth. The law that has made them water and earth is his own law by which he has separated the play from the player, for therein the joy of

the player consists.

As by the limits of law nature is separated from God, so it is the limits of its egoism which separates the self from him. He has willingly set limits to his will, and has given us mastery over the little world of our own. It is like a father's settling upon his son some allowance within the limit of which he is free to do what he like. Though it remains a portion of the father's own property, yet he frees it from the operation of his own will. The reason of it is that the will, which is love's will and therefore free, can have its joy only in a union with another free will. The tyrant who must have slaves looks upon them as instruments of his purpose. It is the consciousness of his own necessity which makes him crush the will out of them to make his self-interest absolutely secure. This selfinterest cannot brook the least freedom in others, because it is not itself free. The tyrant is really dependent on his slaves, and therefore he tries to make them completely useful by making them subservient to his own will. But a lover must have two wills for the realization of his love, because the consummation of love is in harmony, the harmony between freedom and freedom. So God's love from which our self has taken form has made it separate from God; and it is God's love which again establishes a reconciliation and unites God with our self through the separation. That is why our self has to go through endless renewals. For in its career of separateness it cannot go on for ever. Separateness is the finitude where it finds its barriers to come back again and again to its infinite source. Our self has ceaselessly to cast off its age, repeatedly shed its limits in oblivion and death, in order to realise its immortal youth. Its personality must merge in the universal time after time, in fact pass through it every moment, ever to refresh its individual life. It must follow the eternal rhythm and touch the fundamental unity at every step, and thus maintain its separation balanced in beauty and strength.

The play of life and death we see everywhere-this transmutation of the old into the new. The day comes to us every morning, naked and white, fresh as a flower. But we know it is old. It is age itself. It is that very ancient day which took up the newborn earth in its arms covered it. with its white mantle of light, and sent it forth on its pilgrimage among the stars.

Yet its feet are untired and its eyes undimmed. It carries the golden amulet of ageless eternity, at whose touch all wrinkles vanish from the forehead of creation. In the very core of the world's heart stands immortal youth. Death and decay cast over its face momentary shadows and pass on; they leave no marks of their steps-and truth remains fresh and young.

This old, old day of our earth is born again and again every morning. It comes back to the original refrain of its music. If its march were the march of an infinite straight line, if it had not the awful pause of its plunge in the abysmal darkness and its repeated rebirth in the life of the endless beginning, then it would gradually soil and bury truth with its dust and spread ceaseless aching over the earth under its heavy tread. Then every moment would leave its load of weariness behind, and decrepitude would reign supreme on its throne of eternal dirt.

But every morning the day is reborn among the newly-blossomed flowers with the same message retold and the same assurance renewed that death eternally dies, that the waves of turmoil are on the surface, and that the sea of tranquillity is fathomless. The curtain of night is drawn aside and truth emerges without a speck of dust on its garment, without a furrow of age on its lineaments.

We see that he who is before everything else is the same to-day. Every note of the song of creation comes fresh from his voice. The universe is not a mere echo, reverberating from sky to sky, like a homeless wanderer-the echo of an old song sung once for all in the dim beginning of things and then left orphaned. Every moment it comes from the heart of the master, it is breathed in his breath.

And that is the reason why it overspreads the sky like a thought taking shape in a poem, and never has to break into pieces with the burden of its own accumulating weight. Hence the surprise of endless variations, the advent of the unaccountable, the ceaseless procession of individuals, each of whom is without a parallel in creation. As at the first so to the last, the beginning never ends-the world is ever old and ever new.

It is for our self to know that it must be born .grew every moment of its life. It must break through all illusions that encase it in their crust to make it appear old, burdening it with death.

For life is immortal youthfulness, and it hates age that tries to clog its movements-age that belongs not to life in truth, but follows it as the shadow follows the lamp.

Our life, like a river, strikes its banks not to find itself closed in by them, but to realise anew every moment that it has its unending opening towards the sea. It is as a poem that strikes its metre at every step not to be silenced by its rigid regulations, but to give expression every moment to the inner freedom of its harmony:

The boundary walls of our individuality thrust us back within our limits, on the one hand, and thus lead us, on the other, to the unlimited. Only when we try to make. these limits infinite are we launched into an impossible contradiction and court miserable failure.

This is the cause which leads to the great revolutions in human history. Whenever the part, spurning the whole, tries to run a separate course of its own, the great pull of the all gives it a violent wrench, stops it suddenly, and brings it to the dust. Whenever the individual tries to dam the ever-flowing current of the world-force and imprison it within the area of his particular use, it brings on disaster. However powerful a king may be, he cannot raise his standard of rebellion against the infinite source of strength, which is unity, and yet remain powerful.

It has been said, By *unrighteousness men prosper, gain what they desire, and triumph over their enemies, but at the end they are out off at the roof and suffer extinction*[1]. Our roots must go deep down -into the universal if we would attain the greatness of personality.

1. Adharmenaidhate tavat tato bhadrani pacyati tatah sapatnan jayati samulastu vinacyati

It is the end of our self to seek that union. It must bend its head low in love and meekness and take its stand where great and small all meet. It has to gain by its loss and rise by its surrender. His games would be a horror to the child if he could not core back to his mother, and our pride of personality will be a curse to us if we cannot give it up in love. We must know that it is only the revelation of the infinite which is endlessly new and eternally beautiful in us and gives the only meaning to our self.

Realization In Love

WE come now to the eternal problem of the coexistence of the infinite and the finite, of the supreme being and our soul. There is the sublime paradox that lies at the root of existence. We never can go round it, because we never can stand outside the problem and weigh it against any other possible alternative. But the problem exists in logic only; in reality it does not offer us any difficulty at all. Logically speaking, the distance between two points, however near, may be said to be infinite, because it is infinitely divisible. But we do cross the infinite at every step, and meet the eternal in every second. Therefore some of our philosophers say there is no such thing as finitude; it is but a *maya*, anillusion. The real is the infinite, and it is only *maya*, the unreality, which causes the appearance of the finite. But the word *maya* is a mere name, it is no explanation. It is merely saying that with truth there is this appearance which is the opposite of truth; but how they come. to- exist at one and the same time is incomprehensible.

We have what we call in Sanskrit *dvandva* a series of opposites in creation; such as, positive pole and the negative, the centripetal force and the centrifugal, attraction and repulsion. These are also mere names, they are no explanations. They are only different ways of asserting that the world in its essence is a reconciliation of pairs of opposing forces. These forces, like the left and the the right hands of the creator, are acting in absolute harmony, yet acting from opposite directions.

There is a bond of harmony between our two eyes, which makes them act in unison. Likewise there is an unbreakable continuity of relation in the physical world between heat and cold, light and darkness, motion and rest, as between the bass and treble notes of a piano. That is why these opposites do not bring confusion in the universe, but harmony. If creation were but a chaos, we should have to imagine the two opposing principles as trying to get the better of each other. But the universe is not under martial law, arbitrary and provisional. Here we find no force which can run amok, or go on indefinitely in its wild road, like an exiled outlaw, breaking all harmony with its surroundings; each force, on the contrary, has to come back in a curved line to its equilibrium. Waves rise, each to its individual height in a seeming attitude of unrelenting competition, but only up to a certain point; and thus we know of the great repose of the sea to which they are all related, and to which they must all return in a rhythm which is marvellously beautiful.

In fact, these undulations and vibrations, these risings and fallings, are not due to the erratic contortions of disparate bodies, they are a rhythmic dance. Rhythm never can be born of the haphazard struggle of combat. Its underlying principle must be unity, not opposition.

This principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries. The existence of a duality at once raises a question in our minds, and we seek its solution in the One. When at last we find a

relation between these two, and thereby see them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth. And then we give utterance to this most startling of all paradoxes, that the One appears as many, that the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it.

Curiously enough, there are men who lose that feeling of mystery, which is at the root of all our delights, when they discover the uniformity of law among the diversity of nature. As if gravitation is not more of a mystery than the fall of an apple, as if the evolution from one scale of being to the other is not something which is even more shy of explanation than a succession of creations. The trouble is that we very often stop at such a law as if it were the final end of our search, and then we find that it does not evert begin to emancipate our spirit. It only gives satisfaction to our intellect, and as it does not appeal to our whole being it only deadens in us the sense of the infinite.

A great poem, when analysed, is a set of detached sounds. The reader who finds out the meaning, which is the inner medium that connects these outer sounds, discovers a perfect law all through, which is never violated in the least; the law of the evolution of ideas, the law of the music and the form.

But law in itself is a limit. It only shows that whatever is can never be otherwise. When a man is exclusively occupied with the search for the links of causality, his mind succumbs to the tyranny of law in escaping from the tyranny of facts. In learning a language, when from mere words we reach the laws of words we have gained a great deal. But if we stop at that point, and only concern ourselves with the marvels of the formation of a language, seeking the hidden reason of all its apparent caprices, we do not reach the end-for grammar is not literature, prosody is not a poem.

When we come to literature we find that though it conforms to rules of grammar it is yet a thing of joy, it is freedom itself. The beauty of a poem is bound by strict laws, yet it transcends them. The laws are its wings, they do not keep it weighed down, they carry it to freedom. Its form is in law but its spirit is in beauty. Law is the first step towards freedom, and beauty is the complete liberation which stands on the pedestal of law. Beauty harmonises in itself the limit and the. beyond, the law and the liberty.

In the world-poem, the discovery of the law of its rhythms, the measurement of its expansion and contraction, movement and pause, the pursuit of its evolution of forms and characters, are true achievements of the mind; but we cannot stop there. It is like a railway station; but the station platform is not our home. Only he has attained the final truth who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy.

This leads me to think how mysterious the relation of the human heart with nature must be. In the outer world of activity nature has one aspect, but in our hearts, in the inner world, it presents an altogether different picture.

Take an instance-the flower of a plant. However fine and dainty it may look, it is pressed to do a great service, and its colours and forms are suited to its work, It must bring forth the fruits or the continuity of plant life will be broken and the earth will be turned into a desert ere long. The colour and the smell of the flower are all for some purpose therefore; no sooner is it fertilised by the bee, and the time of its fruition arrives, than it sheds its exquisite petals and a cruel economy compels it to give up its sweet perfume. It has no time to flaunt its finery, for it is busy beyond measure. Viewed from without, necessity seems to be the only factor in nature for which everything works and moves. There the bud develops into the flower, the flower into the fruit, the fruit into the seed, the seed into a new plant again, and so forth, the chain of activity running on unbroken. Should there crop up any disturbance or impediment, no excuse would be accepted, and the unfortunate thing thus choked in its movement would at once be labelled as rejected, and be bound to die and disappear post-haste. In the great office of nature there are innumerable departments with endless work going on, and the fine flower that you behold there, gaudily attired and scented like a dandy, is by no means what it appears to be, but rather, is like a labourer toiling in sun and shower, who has to submit a clear account of his work and has and no breathing space to enjoy himself in playful frolic.

But when this same flower enters the heart of men its aspect of busy practicality is gone, and it becomes the very emblem of leisure and repose. The same object that is the embodiment of endless activity without is the perfect expression of beauty and peace within.

Science here warns us that we are mistaken, that the purpose of a flower is nothing but what is outwardly manifested, and that the relation of beauty and sweetness which we think it bears to us is all our own making, gratuitous and imaginary.

But our heart replies that we are not in the least mistaken. In the sphere of nature the flower carries with it a certificate which recommends it as having immense capacity for doing useful work, but it brings an altogether different letter of introduction when it knocks at the door of our hearts. Beauty becomes its only qualification. At one place it comes as a slave, and at another as a free thing. How, then, should we give credit to its first recommendation and disbelieve the second one? That the flower has got its being in the unbroken chain of causation is true beyond doubt; but that is an outer truth. The inner truth is: *Verily from the everlasting joy do all objects have their birth*[1].

A flower, therefore, has not its only function in nature, but has another great function to exercise in the mind of man. And what is that function? In nature its work is that of a servant who has to make his appearance at appointed times, but in the heart of man it comes like a messenger from the King. In the Ramayana, when Sita, forcibly separated from her husband, was bewailing her evil fate in Ravana's golden palace, she was met by a messenger who brought with him

1. *Anandadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante.*

a ring of her beloved Ramchandra himself. The very sight of it convinced Sita of the truth of the tidings he bore. She was at once reassured that he came indeed from her beloved one, who had not forgotten her and was at hand to rescue her.

Such a messenger is a flower from our great lover. Surrounded with the pomp and pageantry of worldliness, which may be likened to Ravana's golden city, we still live in exile, while the insolent spirit of worldly prosperity tempts us with allurements and claims us as its bride. In the meantime the flower comes across with a message from the other shore, and whispers in our ears, 'I am come. He has sent me. I am a messenger of the beautiful, the one whose soul is the bliss of love. This island of isolation has been bridged over by him, and he has not forgotten thee, and will rescue thee even now. He will draw thee unto him and make thee his own. This illusion will not hold thee in thraldom for ever.

If we happen to be awake then, we question. him: 'How are we to know that thou art come from him indeed?' The messenger says, 'Look! I have this ring from him. How lovely are its hues and charms!'

Ah, doubtless it is his-indeed, it is our wedding ring. Now all else passes into oblivion, only this sweet symbol of the touch of the eternal love fills us with a deep longing. We realise that the palace of gold where we are has nothing to do with us-our deliverance is outside itand there our love has its fruition and our life its fulfilment.

What to the bee in nature is merely colour and scent, and the marks or spots which show the right track to the honey, is to the human heart beauty and untrammelled by necessity. They bring a love-letter to the heart written in many-coloured inks.

I was telling you, therefore, that however busy our active nature outwardly may be, she has a secret chamber within the heart where she comes and goes freely, without any design whatsoever. There the fire of her workshop is transformed into lamps of a festival, the noise of her factory is heard like music. The iron chain of cause and effect sounds heavily outside in nature, but in the human heart its unalloyed delight seems to sound, as it were, like the golden strings of a harp.

It indeed seems to be wonderful that nature has these two aspects at one and the same time, and so antithetical-one being of thraldom and the other of freedom. In the same form, sound, colour, and taste two contrary notes are heard, one of necessity and the other of joy. Outwardly nature is busy and restless, inwardly she is all silence and peace. She has toil on one side and leisure on the other. You see her-bondage only when you see her from without, but within her heart is .a limitless beauty.,

Our seer says, 'From joy are born all creatures, by joy they are sustained, towards joy they progress, and into joy they enter.'

Not that he ignores law, or that his contemplation of this infinite. joy is born of the intoxication produced by an indulgence in abstract thought. He fully recognises the inexorable laws of nature, and says, 'Fire burns for fear of him (i.e. by his law); the sun shines by fear of him; and for fear of him the wind, the clouds, and death perform their offices.' It is a reign of iron rule, ready to punish the least transgression. Yet the poet chants the glad song, 'From joy are born all creatures, by joy they are sustained, towards joy they progress, and into joy they enter.'

The immortal being manifests himself in joy-form.[1] His manifestation in creation is out of his fulness of joy. It is the nature of this abounding joy to realise itself in form which is law. The joy, which is without form, must create, must translate itself into forms. The joy of the singer is expressed in the form of a song, that of the poet in the form of a poem. Man in his role of a creator is ever creating forms, and they come out of his abounding joy.

This joy, whose other name is love, must *be* in very nature have duality for its realization. When the singer has his inspiration he makes himself into two; he has within; him his other self as the hearer, and the outside audience is merely an extension of this other self of his. The lover seeks his own other self in his beloved. It is the joy that creates this separation, in order to realise through obstacles the union.

The *amritam,* the immortal bliss, has made himself into two. Our soul is the loved one, it is his other self. We are separate; but if this separation were absolute, then there would have been absolute misery and unmitigated evil in this world. Then from untruth we never could react; truth, and from sin we never could hope to attain purity of heart; then all opposites would ever remain opposite, and we could never find a medium through which our differences could ever tend to meet. Then we could have no language, no understanding, no blending of hearts, no co-operation in life. But on the contrary, we find that the separateness of objects is in a fluid state. Their individualities are ever changing, they are meeting and merging into each other, till science itself is turning into metaphysics, matter losing its boundaries, and the definition of life becoming more and more indefinite.

Yes, out individual soul has been separated from the supreme soul, but this has not been from alienation but from the fulness of love. It is for that reason that untruths, sufferings, and evils are not at a standstill; the human .soul can defy them, can overcome them, nay, call altogether transform them into new power and beauty.

The singer is translating his song into singing, joy into forms, and the hearer has to translate back the singing into the original joy; then the communion between the singer and the hearer is complete. The infinite joy is manifesting itself in manifold forms, taking upon itself the bondage of law, and we fulfil our destiny when we go back from forms to joy, from law to the love, when we untie the knot of the finite and hark back to the infinite.

1. Anandarupamamritam yad vibhati.

The human soul is on its journey from the law to love, from discipline to liberation, from the moral plane to the spiritual. Buddha preached the discipline of self-restraint and moral life; it is a complete acceptance of law.

But this bondage of law cannot be an end by itself; by mastering it thoroughly we acquire the means of getting beyond it. It is going back to Brahma, to the infinite love, which is manifesting itself through the finite forms of law. Buddha names it *Brahma-vihara,* the joy of living in Brahma. He who wants to reach this stage, according to Buddha, 'shall deceive none, entertain no hatred for anybody, and never wish to injure through anger. He shall have measureless love for all creatures, even as a mother has for her only child, whom she protects with her own life. Up above, below, and all around him he shall extend his love, which is without bounds and obstacles, and which is free from all cruelty and antagonism. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down, till he falls asleep, he shall keep his mind active in this exercise of universal goodwill.'

Want of love is a degree of callousness; for love is the perfection of consciousness. We do not love because we do not comprehend, or rather we do not comprehend because we do not love. For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is truth; it is the joy that is at the root of all creation. It is the white light of pure consciousness that emanates from Brahma. So, to be one with this *sarvanubhuh,* this all-feeling being who is in the external sky, as well as in our inner soul, we must attain to that summit of consciousness, which is love: *Who could have breathed or moved if the sky were not filled with joy, with love?*[1] It is through the heightening of our consciousness into love, and extending it all over the world, that we can attain *Brahmavihara,* communion with this infinite joy.

Love spontaneously gives itself in endless gifts. But these gifts lose their fullest significance if through them we do not reach that love, which is the giver. To do that, we must have love in our own heart. He who has no love in him values the gifts of his lover only according to their usefulness. But utility is temporary and partial. It can never occupy our whole being; what is useful only touches us at the point where we have some want. When the want is satisfied, utility becomes a burden if it still persists. On the other hand, a mere token is of permanent worth to us when we have love in our heart. For it is not for any special use. It is an end in itself; it is for our whole being and therefore can never tire us.

The question is, in what manner do we accept this world, which is a perfect gift of joy? Have we been able to receive it in our heart where we keep enshrined things that are of deathless value to us? We are frantically busy making use of the forces of the universe to gain more and more power; we feed and we clothe ourselves from its stores, we scramble for its riches, and it becomes for us a field of fierce competition. But were we born for this, to extend our proprietary rights over this world and make of it a marketable commodity? When our whole mind is bent only upon making use of this world it loses for us its true value. We make it cheap by our sordid desires; and thus to the end of our days we only try to feed upon it and miss its truth, just like the greedy child who tears leaves from a precious book and tries to swallow them.

In the lands where cannibalism is prevalent man looks upon man as his food. In such a country civilization can never thrive, for there man loses his higher value and is made common indeed. But there are other kinds of cannibalism, perhaps not so gross, but not less heinous, for which one need not travel far. In countries higher in the scale of civilization we find sometimes man looked upon as a mere body, and he is bought and sold in the market by the price of his flesh only. And sometimes he gets his sole value from being useful; he is made into a machine, and is traded upon by the man of money to acquire for him more money. Thus our lust, our greed, our love of comfort result in cheapening man to his lowest value. It is self-deception on a large scale. Our desires blind us to the truth that there is in man, and this is the greatest wrong done by ourselves to our own soul. It deadens our consciousness, and is but a gradual method of spiritual suicide. It produces ugly sores in the body of civilization, gives rise to its hovels and brothels, its vindictive penal codes, its cruel prison systems, its organised method of exploiting foreign races to the extent of permanently injuring them by depriving them of the discipline of self-government and means of self-defence.

Of course man is useful to man, because his body is a marvellous machine and his mind an organ of wonderful efficiency. But he is a spirit as well, and this spirit is truly known only by love. When we define a man by the market value of the service we can expect of him, we know him imperfectly. With this limited knowledge of him it becomes easy for us to be unjust to him and to entertain feelings of triumphant selfcongratulation when, on account of some cruel advantage on our side, we can get out of him much more than we have paid for. But when we know him as a spirit we know him as our own. We at once feel that cruelty to him is cruelty to ourselves, to make him small is stealing from our own humanity, and in seeking to make use of him solely for personal profit we merely gain in money or comfort what we pay for in truth.

One day I was out in a boat on the Ganges. It was a beautiful evening in autumn. The sun had just set; the silence of the sky was full to the brim with ineffable peace and beauty. The vast expanse of water was without a ripple, mirroring all the changing shades of the sunset glow. Miles and miles of a desolate sandbank lay like a huge amphibious reptile of some antediluvian age, with its scales glistening in shining colours. As our boat was silently gliding by the precipitous river-bank, riddled with the nest-holes of a colony of birds, suddenly a big fish leapt up to the surface of the water and then disappeared, displaying on its vanishing figure all the colours of the evening sky. It drew aside for a moment the many-coloured screen behind which there was a silent

1. Ko hyevanyat kah pranyat yadesha akaca anando na syat

world full of the joy of life. It came up from the depths of its mysterious dwelling ,with a beautiful dancing motion and added its own music to the silent symphony of the dying day. I felt as if I had a friendly greeting from an alien world in its own language, and it touched my heart with a flash of gladness. Then suddenly the man at the helm exclaimed with a distinct note of regret, 'Ah, what a big fish!' It at once brought before his vision the picture of the fish caught and made ready for his supper. He could only look at the fish through his desire, and thus missed the whole truth of its existence. But man is not entirely an animal. He aspires to a spiritual vision, which is the vision of the whole truth. This gives him the highest delight, because it reveals to him the deepest harmony that exists between him and his surroundings. It is our desires that limit the scope of our self-realization, hinder our extension of consciousness, and give rise to sin, which is the innermost barrier that keeps us apart from our God, setting up disunion and the arrogance of exclusiveness. For sin is not one mere action, but it is an attitude of life which takes for granted that our goal is finite, that our self is the ultimate truth, and that we are not all essentially one but exist each for his own separate individual existence.

So I repeat we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him. Civilization trust be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity. The first question and the last which it has to answer is, Whether and how far it recognise.- man more as a spirit than as a machine? Whenever some ancient civilization fell into decay and died, it was owing to causes which produced callousness of heart and led to the cheapening of man's worth; when either the state or some powerful group of men began to look upon the people as a mere instrument of their power; when, by compelling weaker races to slavery and trying to keep them down by every means, man struck at the foundation of his greatness, his own love of freedom and fair-play. Civilization can never sustain itself upon cannibalism of any form. For that by which alone man is true can only be nourished by love and justice.

As with man, so with this universe. When we look at the world through the veil of our desires we make it small and narrow, and fail to perceive its full truth. Of course it is obvious that the world serves us and fulfils our needs, but our relation to it does not end there. We are bound to it with a deeper and truer bond than that of necessity. Our soul is drawn to it; our love of life is really our wish to continue our relation with this great world. This relation is one of love. We are glad that we are in it; we are attached to it with numberless threads, which extend from this earth to the stars. Man foolishly tries to prove his superiority by imagining his radical separateness from what he calls his physical world, which, in his blind fanaticism, he sometimes goes to the extent of ignoring altogether, holding it as his direst enemy. Yet the more his knowledge progresses, the more it becomes difficult for man to establish this separateness, and all the imaginary boundaries he had set up around himself vanish one after another. Every time we lose some of our badges of absolute distinction by which we conferred upon our humanity the right to hold itself apart from its surroundings, it gives us a ,shock of humiliation. But we have to submit to this. If we set up our pride on the path of our self-realization to create divisions and disunion, then it must sooner or later come under the wheels of truth and be ground to dust. No, we are not burdened with ṣome monstrous superiority, unmeaning in its singular abruptness. It would be utterly degrading for us to live in a world immeasurably less than ourselves in the quality of soul, just as it would be repulsive and degrading to be surrounded and served by a host of slaves, day and night, from birth to the moment of death. On the ,contrary, this world is our compeer, nay, we are one with it.

Through our progress in science the wholeness of the world and our oneness with it is becoming clearer to our mind. When this perception of the perfection of unity is not merely intellectual, when it opens out our whole being into a luminous consciousness of the all, then it becomes a radiant joy, an overspreading love. Our spirit finds its larger self in the whole world, and is filled with an absolute certainty that it is immortal. It dies a hundred times in its enclosures of self; for separateness is doomed to die, it cannot be. made eternal. But it never can die where it is one with the all, for there is its truth, its joy. When a man feels the rhythmic throb of the soul-life of the whole world in his own soul, then is he free. Then he enters into the secret courting that goes on between this beautiful world-bride, view with the veil of the many-coloured finiteness and the *paramatmam,* the bridegroom, in his spotless white. Then he knows that he is the partaker in this gorgeous love festival, -and he is the honoured guest at the feast of immortality. Then he understands the meaning of the seer-poet who sings, 'From love the world is born, by love it is sustained, towards love it moves, and into love it enters.'

In love all the contradictions of existence merge themselves and are lost. Only in love are unity and duality not at variance. Love must be one and two at the same time.

Only love is motion and rest in one. Our heart ever ,changes its place till it finds love, and then it has its rest. But this rest itself is an intense form of activity where utter quiescence. end unceasing energy meet at the same point in love.

In love, loss and gain are harmonised. In its balance-sheet, credit and debit accounts are in the same column, and gifts are added to gains. In this wonderful festival of creation, :his great ceremony of self-sacrifice of God, the lover constantly gives himself up to gain himself in love. Indeed, love is what brings together and. inseparably connects both the act of .abandoning and that of receiving.

In love of one of its poles you find the personal, and at the other the impersonal. At one you have the positive assertion-Here I am; at the other the equally strong denial-I am not. Without this ego what is love? And again, with only

this ego how can love be possible?

Bondage and liberation are not antagonistic in love. For love is most free and at the same time most bound. If God were absolutely free there would be no creation. The infinite being has assumed unto himself the mystery of finitude. And in him who is love the finite and the infinite are made one.

Similarly, when we talk about the relative values of freedom and non-freedom, it becomes a mere play of words. It is not that we desire freedom alone, we want thraldom as well. It is the high function of love to welcome all limitations and to transcend them. For nothing is more independent than love, and where else, again, shall we find so much of dependence? In love, thraldom is as glorious as freedom.

The *Vaishnava* religion has boldly declared that God has bound himself to man, and in that consists the greatest glory of human existence. In the spell of the wonderful rhythm of the finite he fetters himself at every step, and thus gives his love out in music in his most perfect lyrics of beauty. Beauty is his wooing of our heart; it can have no other purpose. It tells us everywhere that the display of power is not the ultimate meaning of creation; wherever there is a bit of colour, a note of song, a grace of form, there comes the call for our love. Hunger compels us to obey its behests, but hunger is not the last word for a man. There have been men who have deliberately defied its commands to show that the human soul is not to be led by the pressure of wants and threat of pain. In fact, to live the life of man we have to resist its demands every day, the least of us as well as the greatest. But, on the other hand, there is a beauty in the world, which never insults our freedom, never raises even its little finger to make us acknowledge its sovereignty. We can absolutely ignore it and suffer no penalty in consequence. It is a call to us, but not a command. It seeks for love in us, and love can never be had by compulsion. Compulsion is not indeed the final appeal to man, but joy is. And joy is everywhere; it is in the earth's green covering of grass; in the blue serenity of the sky; in the reckless exuberance of spring; in the severe abstinence of grey winter; in the living flesh that animates our bodily frame; in the perfect poise of the human figure, noble and upright; in living; in the exercise of all our powers; in the acquisition of knowledge; in fighting evils; in dying for gains we never can share. Joy is there everywhere; it is superfluous, unnecessary; nay, it very often contradicts the most peremptory behests of necessity. It exists to show that the bonds of law can only be explained by love; they are like body and soul. Joy is the realization of the truth of oneness, the oneness of our soul with the world and of the world-soul with the supreme lover.

Realization In Action

IT is only those who have known that joy expresses itself through law who have learnt to transcend the law. Not that the bonds of law have ceased to exist for them-but that the bonds have become to them as the form of freedom incarnate. The freed soul delights in accepting bonds, and does not seek to evade any of them, for in each does it feel the manifestation of an infinite energy whose joy is in creation.

As a matter of fact, where there are no bonds, where there is the madness of licence, the soul ceases to be free. There is its hurt; there is its separation from the infinite, its agony of sin. Wherever at the call of temptation the soul falls away from the bondage of law, then, like a child deprived of the support of its mother's arms, it cries out, *Smite me not*! 'Bind me,' it prays, 'oh, bind me in the bonds of thy law; bind me within and without; hold me tight; let me in the clasp of law be bound up together with thy joy; protect me by thy firm hold from the deadly laxity of sin.'

As some, under the idea that law is the opposite of joy, mistake intoxication for joy, so there are many in our country who imagine action to be opposed to freedom. They think that activity being in the material plane is a restriction of the free spirit of the soul. But we must remember that as joy expresses itself in law, so the soul finds its freedom in action. It is because joy cannot find expression in itself alone that it desires the law which is outside. Likewise it is because the soul cannot find freedom within itself that it wants external action. The soul of man is ever freeing itself from it own folds by its activity; had it been otherwise it could not have, done any voluntary work.

The more man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer does he bring the distant Yet-to-be. In that actualisation man is ever making himself more and yet more distinct, and seeing himself clearly under newer and newer aspects in the midst of his varied activities, in the state, in society. This vision makes for freedom.

Freedom is not in darkness, nor in vagueness. There is no bondage so fearful as that of obscurity. It is to escape from this obscurity that the seed struggles. to sprout, the bud to blossom. It is to rid itself of this envelope of vagueness that the ideas in our mind are constantly seeking opportunities to take on outward form. In the same way our soul, in order to release itself from the mist of indistinctness and come out into the open, is continually creating for itself fresh fields of action, and is busy contriving new forms of activity, even such as are not needful for the purposes of its earthly life. And why? Because it wants freedom. It wants to see itself, to realise itself.

When man cuts down the pestilential jungle and makes unto himself a garden, the beauty that he thus sets free from within its enclosure of ugliness is the beauty of his own soul: without giving it this freedom outside, he cannot make it free

1. Ma ma himsih.

within. When he implants law and order in the midst of the waywardness of society, the good which he sets free from the obstruction of the bad is the goodness of his own soul: without being thus made free outside it cannot find freedom within. Thus is man continually engaged in setting free in action his powers, his beauty, his goodness, his very soul. And the more he succeeds in so doing, the greater does he see himself to be, the broader becomes the field of his knowledge of self.

The Upanishad says: In the midst of activity alone wilt thou desire *to* live a hundred years.[1] It is the saying of those who had amply tasted the joy of the soul. Those who have fully realised the soul have never talked in mournful accents of the sorrowfulness of life or of the bondage of action. They are not like the weakling flower whose stem-hold is so light that it drops away before attaining fruition. They hold on to life with all their might and say, 'never will we let go till the fruit is ripe'.'They desire in their joy to express themselves strenuously in their life and in their work. Pain and sorrow dismay them not, they are not bowed down to the dust by the weight of their own heart. With the erect head of the victorious hero they march through life seeing themselves and showing themselves in increasing resplendence or soul through both joys and sorrows. The joy of their life keeps step with the joy off that energy which is playing at building and breaking throughout the universe. The joy of the sunlight, the joy of the free air, mingling with the joy of their lives, makes one sweet harmony reign within and without. It is they who say, *In the midst of activity alone will thou desire to live hundred years.*

This joy of life, this joy of work, in man is absolutely true. It is no use saying that it is a delusion of ours: that unless we cast it away we cannot enter upon the path of self-realization. It will never do the least good to attempt the realization of the infinite apart from tile world of action.

It is not the truth that man is active on compulsion. If there is compulsion on one side, on the other there is pleasure; on the one hand action is spurred on by want, on the other it hies to its natural fulfilment. That is why, as man's civilisations advance, he increases his obligations and the work that he willingly creates for himself. One would have thought that nature had given him quite enough to do to keep him busy, in fact that it was working him to death with the lash of hunger and thirst,-but no. Man does not think that sufficient; he cannot rest content with only doing the work that nature prescribes for him in common with the birds and beasts. He needs must surpass all, even in activity. No creature has to work so hard as man; he has been impelled to contrive for himself a vast field of action in society; and in this field he is for ever building up and pulling down, making and unmaking laws, piling up heaps of material, and incessantly thinking, seeking and suffering. In this field he has fought his mightiest battles, gained continual new life, made death glorious, and, far from evading troubles, has willingly and continually taken up the burden of fresh trouble. He has discovered the truth that he is not complete in the cage of his immediate surroundings, that he is greater than his present, and that while to stand still in one place may be comforting, the arrest of life destroys his true function and the real purpose of his existence.

This *mahati vinashtih-this aural destruction* he cannot bear, and accordingly he toils and suffers in order that he may gain in stature by transcending his present, in order to become that which he yet is not. In this travail is mans glory, and it is because he knows it, that he has not sought to circumscribe his field of action, but is constantly occupied in extending the bounds. *Sometimes he* wanders so far that his work tends to lose its meaning, and his rushings to and fro create fearful eddies round different centres-eddies of self-interest, of pride of power. Still, so long as the strength of the current is not lost, there is no fear; the obstructions and the dead accumulations of his activity are dissipated and carried away; the impetus corrects its own mistakes. Only when the soul sleeps in stagnation do its enemies gain overmastering strength, and these obstructions become too clogging to be fought through. Hence have we been warned by our teachers that to work we must live, to live we must work; that life and activity are inseparably connected.

It is the very characteristic of life that it is not complete within itself; it must come out. Its truth is in the commerce of the inside and the outside. In order to live, the body must maintain its various relations with the outside light and air-not only to gain life-force, but also to manifest it. Consider how fully employed the body is with its own inside activities; its heart-beat must not stop for a second, its stomach, its brain, must be ceaselessly working. Yet this is not enough; the body is outwardly restless all the while. Its life leads it to an endless dance of work and play outside; it cannot be satisfied with the circulations of its internal economy, and only finds the fulfilment of joy in its outward excursions.

The same with the soul. It cannot live on its own internal feelings and imaginings. It is ever in need of external objects; not only to feed its inner consciousness but to apply itself in action, not only to receive but also to give.

The real truth is, we cannot live if we divide him who is truth itself into two parts. We must abide in him within as well as without. In whichever aspect we deny him we deceive ourselves and incur a loss. *Brahma has not left me, let me no! leave Brahma,*[1] If we say that we would realise him in introspection alone and leave him out of our external activity, that we would enjoy him by the love in our heart, but not worship him by outward ministrations; or if we say the opposite, and overweight ourselves on one side in the journey of our life's quest, we shall alike totter to our downfall.

In the great western continent we see that the soul of man is mainly concerned with extending itself outwards; the open field of the exercise of power is its field. Its partiality is entirely for the world of extension, and it would leave aside-

1. Kurvanneveha karmani jijivishet catam samah

nay, hardly believe in-that field of inner consciousness which is the field of fulfilment. It has gone so far in this that the perfection of fulfilment seems to exist for it nowhere. Its science has always talked of the never-ending evolution of the world. Its metaphysics has now begun to talk of the evolution of God himself. They will not admit that he is, they would have it that he also is *becoming*.

They fail to realise that while the infinite is always greater than any assignable limit, it is also complete; that on the one hand Brahma is evolving, on the other he is perfection;that in the one aspect he is essence, in the other manifestation-both together at the same time, as is the song and the act of singing. This is like ignoring the consciousness of the singer and saying that only the singing is in progress, that there is no song. Doubtless we are directly aware only of the singing, and never at any one time of the song as a whole; but do we not all the time know that the complete song is in the soul of the singer?

It is because of this insistence on the doing and the becoming that we perceive in the west the intoxication or power. These men seem to have determined to despoil and grasp everything by force. They would always obstinately be doing and never be done-they would not allow to death its natural place in the scheme of things-they know not the beauty of completion.

In our country the danger comes from the opposite side. Our partiality is for the internal world. We would cast aside with contumely the field of power and of extension. We would realise Brahma in meditation only in his aspect of completeness, we have determined not to see him in the commerce of the universe in his aspect of evolution. That is why in our seekers we so often find the intoxication of the spirit and its consequent degradation. Their faith would acknowledge no bondage of law, their imagination soars unrestricted, their conduct disdains to offer any explanation to reason. Their intellect, in its vain attempts to see Brahma inseparable from his creation, works itself stone-dry, and their heart, seeking to confine him within its own outpourings, swoons in a drunken ecstasy of emotion. They have not even kept within reach any standard whereby they can measure the loss of strength and character which manhood sustains by thus ignoring the bonds of law and the claims of action in the external universe.

But true spirituality, as taught in our sacred lore, is calmly balanced in strength, in the correlation of the within and the without. The truth has its law, it has its joy. On one side of it is being chanted the *Bhayadasyagnistapati*[1] on the other the *Anan dadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante.*[2] Freedom is impossible of attainment without submission to law, for Brahma is in one aspect bound by his truth, in the other free in his joy.

1. Maham brahma nirakuryyam ma ma brahma nirakarot.

As for ourselves, it is only when we wholly submit to the bonds of truth that we fully gain the joy of freedom. And how? As does the string that is bound to the harp. When the harp is truly strung, when there is not the slightest laxity in the strength of the bond, then only does music result; and the string transcending itself in its melody finds and every chord its true freedom. It is because it is bound by such hard and fast rules on the one side that it can find this range of freedom in music on the other. While the string was not true, it was indeed merely bound; but a loosening of its bondage would not have been the way to freedom, which it can only fully achieve by being bound tighter and tighter till it has attained the true pitch.

The bass and treble strings of our duty are only bonds so long as we cannot maintain them steadfastly attuned according to the law of truth; and we cannot call by the name of freedom the loosening of them into the nothingness of inaction. That is why I would say that the true striving in the quest of truth, of dharma, consists not in the neglect of action but in. the effort to attune it closer and closer to the eternal harmony. The text of this striving should be, *Whatever works thou doest, consecrate then to Brahma.*[3] That is to say, the soul is to dedicate itself to Brahma through all its activities. This dedication is the song of the soul, in this is its freedom. Joy reigns when all work becomes the path to the union with Brahma; when the soul ceases to return constantly. to its own desires; when in it our self-offering grows more and more intense. Then there is completion, then there is freedom, then, in this world, comes the kingdom of God.

Who is there that, sitting in his corner, would deride this grand selfexpression of humanity in action, this incessant self-consecration? Who is there that thinks the union of God and man is to be found in some secluded enjoyment of his own imaginings, away from the skytowering temple of the greatness of humanity, which the whole of mankind, in sunshine and storm, is toiling to erect through the ages? Who is there that thinks this secluded communion is the highest form of religion?

O thou distraught wanderer, thou *Sannyyasin*, drunk in the wine of self intoxication, dost thou not already hear the progress of the human soul along the highway traversing the wide fields of humanity the thunder of its progress in the car of its achievements, which is destined to overpass the bounds that prevent its expansion into the universe? The very mountains are cleft asunder and give way before the march of its banners waving triumphantly in the heavens; as the mist before the rising sun, the tangled obscurities of material things vanish at its irresistible approach. Pain, disease, and disorder are at every step receding before its onset; the obstructions

1. 'For fear of him the fire doth bum,' etc.
2. 'From joy are born all created things,' etc.
3. Yadyat karma prakurvita tadbrahmani samarpayet.*

of ignorance are being thrust aside; the darkness of blindness is being pierced through; and behold, the promised lard of wealth and health, of poetry and art, of knowledge and righteousness is gradually being revealed to view. Do you in your lethargy desire to say that this car of humanity, which is shaking the very earth with the triumph of its progress along the mighty vistas of history, has no charioteer lading it on to its fulfilment? Who is there who refuses to respond to his call to join in this triumphal progress? Who so foolish as to run away from the gladsome throng and seek him in the listlessness of inaction? Who so steered in untruth as to dare to call all this, untrue-this great world of men, this civilization of expanding humanity, this eternal effort of man, through depths of sorrow, through heights of gladness, through innumerable impediments within and without, to win victory for his powers? He who can think of this immensity of achievement as an immense fraud, can he truly believe in God who is the truth? He who thinks to reach God by running away from the world, when and where does he expect to meet him? How far can he fly can he fly and fly, till he flies into nothingness itself? No, the coward who would fly can nowhere find him. We must be brave enough to be able to say: We are reaching him here in this very spot, now at this very moment. We must be able to assure ourselves that as in our actions we are realising ourselves, so in ourselves we are realising him who is the self of self. We must earn the right to say so unhesitatingly by clearing away with our own effort all obstruction, all disorder, all discords from our path of activity; we must be able to say, 'In my work is my joy, and in that joy does the joy of my joy abide.'

Whom does the Upanishad call *The chief among the knowers of* Brahma?[1] He is defined as *He whose joy is* in *Brahma, whose play is in Brahma., the active one.*[1] *Joy* without the play of joy is no joy at all play without activity is no play. Activity is the play of joy. He whose joy is in Brahma, how can he live in inaction? For must he not by his activity provide that in which the joy of Brahma is to take form and manifest itself? That is why he who knows Brahma, who has his joy in Brahma, must also have all his activity in Brahma his eating and drinking, his earning of livelihood and his beneficence. just as the joy of the poet in his poem, of the artist in his art, of the brave man in the output of his courage, of the wise man in his discernment of truths, ever seeks expression in their several activities, so the joy of the knower of Brahma, in the whole of his everyday work, little and big, in truth, in beauty, in orderliness and in beneficence, seeks to give expression to the infinite.

Brahma himself gives expression to his joy in just the same way. By *his many sided activity, which radiates* in *all directions, does he fulfil the inherent want of his different creatures.*[2] That inherent want is he himself, and so he is in so many ways, in so many forms, giving himself. He works, for without working how could he give himself? His joy is ever. dedicating itself in the dedication which is his creation.

In this very thing does our own true meaning lie, in this is our likeness to our father. We must also give up ourselves in many sided variously aimed activity. In the Vedas he is called *the giver of himself, the giver of strength.*[3] He is not content with giving us himself, but he gives us strength that we may likewise give ourselves. That is why the seer of the Upanishad prays to him who is thus fulfilling our wants, *May he grant as the beneficent Mind,*[4] may he fulfil that uttermost want of ours by granting us the beneficent mind. That is to say, it is not enough he alone should work to remove our want, but he should give its the desire and the strength to work with him in his activity and in the exercise of the good. Then, indeed, will our union with him alone be accomplished. The beneficent mind is that which shows us the want *(swartha)* of another self to be the inherent want *(nihitartha)* of our own self; that which shows that our joy consists in the varied aiming of our many .sided powers in the work of humanity. When we work under the guidance of this beneficent mind, then our activity is regulated, but does not become mechanical; it is action not goaded on by want, but stimulated by the satisfaction of the soul. Such activity ceases to be a blind imitation of that of the multitude, a cowardly following of the dictates of fashion. Therein we begin to see that *He is* in *the beginning and in the end of the universe,*[1] and likewise see that of our own work is he the fount and the inspiration, and at the end thereof is he, and therefore that all our activity is pervaded by peace and good and joy.

The Upanishad says: *Knowledge, power, and action are of his nature.* It is because this naturalness has not yet been born in us that we tend to divide joy from work. Our day of work is not our day of joy-for that we require a holiday; for, miserable that we are, we cannot find our holiday in our work. The river finds its holiday in its onward flow, the fire in its outburst of flame, the scent of the flower in its permeation of the atmosphere; but in our everyday work there is no such holiday for us. It is because we do not let ourselves go, because we do not give ourselves joyously and entirely up to it, that our work overpowers us.

O giver of thyself I at the vision of thee as joy let our souls flame up to thee as the fire, flow on to thee as the river, permeate thy being as the fragrance of the flower. Give us strength to love, to love fully, our life in its joys and sorrows, in its gains and losses, in its rise and fall. Let us have strength enough fully to see and hear thy universe and to work with full vigour therein. Let us fully live the life thou hast given us, let us bravely take and bravely give. This is our prayer to thee. Let us once for all dislodge from our minds the feeble fancy that would make out thy joy to be a thing apart from action, thin, formless, and unsustained. Wherever the peasant tills the hard earth, there does thy joy gush out in the green of the corn, wherever man displaces the entangled forest, smooths the stony ground, and clears for himself a homestead, there does thy joy enfold it in orderliness and peace. O worker of the universe! We would pray to thee to let the irresistible current of thy universal energy come like the impetuous south wind of spring, let it come rushing over the vast field of the life of man, let it bring the scent of many flowers, the murmurings of many woodlands, let it make sweet and vocal the lifelessness of our dried-up soul-life. Let our newly awakened powers cry out for unlimited fulfilment in

leaf and flower and fruit.

The Realization of Beauty

THINGS in which we do not take joy are either a burden upon our mind to be got rid of at any cost or they are useful, and therefore in temporary and partial relation to us, becoming burdensome when their utility is lost; or they are like wandering vagabonds, loitering for a moment on the outskirts of our recognition, and then passing on, A thing is only completely our own when it is a thing of joy to us.'

The greater part of this world is to us as if it were nothing. But we cannot allow it to remain so, for thus it belittles our own self. The entire world is given to us, and all our powers have their final meaning in the faith that by their help we are to take possession of our patrimony.

But what is the function of our sense of beauty in this process of the extension of our consciousness? Is it there to separate truth into strong lights and shadows, and bring it before us in its uncompromising distinction of beauty and ugliness? If that were so, then we should have to admit that this sense of beauty creates a dissension in our universe and sets up a wall of hindrance across the highway of communication that leads from each individual thing to all things.

But that cannot be true. As long as our realization is incomplete a division necessarily remains between things known and unknown, pleasant and unpleasant. But in spite of the dictum of some philosophers man does not accept any arbitrary and absolute limit to his knowable world. Every day his science is penetrating into the region formerly marked in his map as unexplored or inexplorable. Our sense of beauty is similarly engaged in ever pushing on its conquests. Truth is everywhere, therefore everything is the object of our knowledge. Beauty is omnipresent, therefore everything, is capable of giving us joy.

In the early days of his history man took everything as a phenomenon of life. His science of life began by creating a sharp distinction between life and non-life. But as it is proceeding farther and farther the line of demarcation between the animate and inanimate is growing more and more dim. In the beginning of our apprehension these sharp lines of contrast are helpful to us, but as our comprehension becomes clearer they gradually fade away.

The Upanishads have said that all things are created and sustained by an infinite joy. To realise, this principle of creation we have to start with a division-the division into the beautiful and the non-beautiful. Then the apprehension of beauty has to come to us with a vigorous blow to awaken our consciousness from its primitive lethargy, and it attains its object by the urgency of the contrast. Therefore our first acquaintance with beauty is in her dress of motley colours, that affects us with its stripes and feathers, nay with its disfigurements. But as our acquaintance ripens, the apparent discords are resolved into modulations of rhythm. At first we detach beauty from its surroundings, we hold it apart from the rest, but at the end we realise its harmony with all. Then the music of beauty has no more need of exciting us with loud noise; it renounces violence, and appeals to our heart with the truth that it is meekness that inherits the earth.

In some stage of our growth, in some period of our history, we try to set up a special cult of beauty, and pare it down to a narrow circle, so as to make it a matter of pride for a chosen few. Then it breeds in its votaries affectations and exaggerations as it did with the Brahmins in the time of the decadence of Indian civilization, when the perception of the higher truth fell away and superstitions grew up unchecked.

In the history of aesthetics there also comes an age of emancipation when the recognition of beauty in things great and small becomes easy, and when we see it more in the unassuming harmony of common objects than in things startling in their singularity. So much so, that we have to go through the stages of reaction when in the representation of beauty we try to avoid everything that is obviously pleasing and that has been crowned by the sanction of convention. We are then tempted in defiance to exaggerate the commonness of commonplace things, thereby making them aggressively uncommon. To restore harmony we create the discords which are a feature of all reactions. We already see in the present age the sign of this aesthetic reaction, which proves that man has at last come to know that it is only the narrowness of perception which sharply divides the field of his aesthetic consciousness into ugliness and beauty. When he has the power to see things detached from self-interest and from the insistent claims of the lust of the senses, then alone can he have the true vision of the beauty that is everywhere. Then only can he see that what is unpleasant to us is not necessarily unbeautiful, but has its beauty in truth.

When we say that beauty is everywhere we do not mean that the word ugliness should be abolished from our language, just as it would be absurd to say that there is no such thing as untruth. Untruth there certainly is, not in the system of the universe, but in our power of comprehension, as its negative element. In the same manner there is ugliness in the distorted expression of beauty in our life and in our art which comes from our imperfect realization of Truth. To a certain extent we can set our life against the law of truth which is in us and which is in all, and likewise we can give rise to ugliness by going counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere.

Through our sense of truth we realise law in creation, and through our sense of beauty we realise harmony in the universe. When we recognize the law in nature we extend our mastery over physical forces and become powerful; when we recognize the law in our moral nature we attain mastery over self and become free. In like manner the more we comprehend the harmony in the physical world the more our life shares the gladness of creation, and our expression of beauty in art becomes more truly catholic. As we become conscious of the

harmony in our soul, our apprehension of the blissfulness of the spirit of the world becomes universal, and the expression of beauty in our life moves in goodness and love towards the infinite. This is the ultimate object of our existence, that we must ever know that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty'; we must realise the whole world in love, for love gives it birth, sustains it, and takes it back to its bosom. We must have that perfect emancipation of heart which gives us the power to stand at the innermost center of things and have the taste of that fullness of disinterested joy which, belongs to Brahma.

Music is the purest form of art, and therefore the most direct expression of beauty, with a form and spirit which is one and simple, and least encumbered with anything extraneous. We seem to feel that the manifestation of the infinite in the finite forms of creation is music itself, silent and visible. The evening sky, tirelessly repeating the starry constellations, seems like a child struck with wonder at the mystery of its own first utterance, lisping the same word over and over again, and listening to it in unceasing joy. When in the rainy night of July the darkness is thick upon the meadows and the pattering rain draws veil upon veil over the stillness of the slumbering earth, this monotony of the rain patter seems to be the darkness of sound itself. The gloom of the dim and dense line of trees, the thorny bushes scattered in the bare heath like floating heads of swimmers with bedraggled hair, the smell of the damp grass and the wet earth, the spire of the temple rising above the undefined mass of blackness grouped around the village hutseverything seems like notes rising from the heart of the night, mingling and losing themselves in the one sound of ceaseless rain filling the sky.

Therefore the true poets, they who are seers, seek to express the universe in terms of music.

They rarely use symbols of painting to express the unfolding of forms, the mingling of endless lines and colours that goes on every moment on the canvas of the blue sky.

They have their reason. For the man who paints must have canvas, brush, and colour-box. The first touch of his brush is very far from the complete idea. And then when the work is finished and the artist is gone, the widowed picture stands alone, the incessant touches of love of the creative hand are withdrawn.

But the singer has everything within him. The notes come out from his very life. They are not materials gathered from outside. His idea and his expression are brother and sister; very often they are born as twins. In music the heart reveals itself immediately; it suffers not from any barrier of alien material.

Therefore though music has to wait for its completeness like any other art, yet at every step it gives out the beauty of the whole. As the material of expression even words are barriers, for their meaning has to be construed by thought. But music never has to depend upon any obvious meaning; it expresses what no words can ever express.

What is more, music and the musician are inseparable. When the singer departs, his singing dies with him; it is in eternal union with the life and joy of the master.

This world-song is never for a moment separated from its singer. It is not fashioned from any outward material. It is his joy itself talking neverending farm. It is the great heart sending the tremor of its thrill over the sky.

There is a perfection in each individual strain of this music, which is the revelation of completion in the incomplete. No one of its notes is final, yet each reflects the infinite.

What does it matter if we fail to derive the exact meaning of this great harmony? Is it not like the hand meeting the string and drawing out at once all its tones at the touch? It is the language of beauty, the caress, that comes from the heart of the world and straightway reaches our heart.

Last night, in the silence which pervaded the darkness, I stood alone and heard the voice of the singer of eternal melodies. When I went to sleep I closed my eyes with this last thought in my mind, that even when I remain unconscious in slumber the dance of life will still go on in the hushed arena of my sleeping body, keeping step with the stars. The heart will throb, the blood will leap in the veins and the millions of living atoms of my body will vibrate in tune with the note of the harp-string that thrills at the touch of the master

The Realization of the Infinite

THE Upanishads say: 'Man becomes true if in this life he can apprehend God; if not, it is the greatest calamity for him.'

But what is the nature of this attainment of God? It is quite evident that the infinite is not like one object among many, to be definitely classified and kept among our possessions, to be used as an ally specially favouring us in our politics, warfare, money-making, or in social competitions. We cannot put our God in the same list with our summerhouses, motor-cars, or our credit at the bank, as so many people seem to want to do.

We must try to understand the true character of the desire that a man has when his soul longs for his God. Does it consist of his wish to make an addition, however valuable, to his belongings? Emphatically no! It is an endlessly wearisome task, this continual adding to our stores.

In fact, when the soul seeks God she seeks her final escape from this incessant gathering and heaping and never coming to an end. It is not an additional object that she seeks, but it is the *nityo'nityanam,* the permanent in all that is impermanent, the *rasanain rasatamah'* the highest abiding joy unifying all enjoyments. Therefore when the Upanishads teach us to realise everything in Brahma, it is not to seek something extra, not to manufacture something new.

Know everything that there is in the universe as enveloped by God[1]*. Enjoy whatever is given by him and harbour not in your mind the greed* for *wealth which is not your own.*[2]

When you know that whatever there is is filled by him and whatever you have is his gift, then you realise the infinite in the finite, and the giver in the gifts. Then you know that all the facts of the reality have their only meaning in the manifestation of the one truth, and all your possessions have their only significance for you, not in themselves but in the relation they establish with the infinite.

So it cannot be said that we can find Brahma as we find other objects; there is no question of searching for him in one thing in preference to another, in one place instead of somewhere else. We do not have to run to the grocer's shop for our morning light; we open our eyes and there it is; so we need only give ourselves up to find that Brahma is everywhere.

This is the reason why Buddha admonished us to free ourselves from the confinement of the life of the self. If there were nothing else to take its place more positively perfect and satisfying, then such admonition would be absolutely unmeaning. No man can seriously consider the advice much less have any enthusiasm for it, of surrendering everything one has for gaining nothing whatever.

1. Icavasyamidam sarvam yat kincha jagatyanjagat.

2. Tena tyaktena bhunjitha ma gridhah kasyasviddhanam.

So our daily worship of God is not really the process of gradual acquisition of him, but the daily process of surrendering ourselves, removing all obstacles to union and extending our consciousness of him in devotion and service, in goodness and to love.

The Upanishads say: *Be lost altogether in Brahma like an arrow that has completely penetrated its target. Thus* to be conscious of being absolutely enveloped by Brahma is not an act of mere concentration of mind. It must be the aim of the whole of our life. In all our thoughts and deeds we must be conscious of the infinite. Let the realization: of this truth become easier every day of our life, *that none could* live or prove if *the energy of the all-pervadhag joy did not fill the* sky.[1] In all our actions let us feel that impetus of the infinite energy and be glad.

It may be said that the infinite is beyond our attainment, so it is for us as if it were naught. Yes, if the word attainment implies any idea of possession, then it must be admitted that the infinite is unattainable. But we must keep in mind that the highest enjoyment of man is not in the having but in a getting, which is at the same time not getting.- Our physical pleasures leave no margin for the unrealised. They, like the dead satellite of the earth, have but little atmosphere around them. When we take food and satisfy our hunger it is a complete act of possession. So long as the hunger is not satisfied it is a pleasure to eat. For then our enjoyment of eating touches at every point the infinite. But, when it attains completion, or in other words, when our desire for eating reaches the end of the stage of its nor,-realization, it reaches the end of its pleasure. In all our intellectual pleasures the margin is broader, the limit is far off. In all our deeper love getting and non-getting run ever parallel. In one of our Vaishnava lyrics the lover says to his beloved: 'I feel as if I have gazed upon the beauty of thy face from my birth, yet my eyes are hungry still: as if I have kept thee pressed to my heart for millions of years, yet my heart is not satisfied.'

This makes it clear that it is really the infinite whom we seek in our pleasures. Our desire for being wealthy is not a desire for a particular sure of money but it is indefinite, and the most fleeting of our enjoyments are but the momentary touches of the eternal. The tragedy of human life consists in our vain attempts to stretch the limits of things which can never become unlimited,-to reach the infinite by absurdly adding to the rungs of the ladder of the finite.

It is evident from this that the real desire of our soul is to get beyond all our possessions. Surrounded by things she can touch and feel, she cries, 'I am weary of getting; ah, where is he who is never to be got?'

We see everywhere in the history of man that the spirit of renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul. When the soul says of anything, 'I do not want it, for I am above it: she gives utterance to the highest truth that is in her. When a girl's life outgrows her doll, when she realises

1. Ko hyevanyat kah pranyat yadesha akaca anando na syat.

that in every respect she is more than her doll is, then she throws it away. By the very act of possession we know that e are greater than the things we possess. It is a perfect misery to be kept bound up with things lesser than ourselves. This it is that Maitreyi felt when her husband gave her his property on the eve of leaving home. She asked him, 'Would these material things help one to attain the highest?'-or, in other words, 'Are they more than my soul to me?' When her husband answered, 'They will make you rich in worldly possessions,' she said at once, Then what am I to do with these?' It is only when a man truly realises what his possessions are that he has no more illusions about them; then he knows his soul is far above these things and he becomes free from their bondage. Thus man truly realises his soul by outgrowing his possessions, and man's progress in the path of eternal is through a series of renunciations.

That we cannot absolutely possess the infinite being is not a mere intellectual proposition. It has to be experienced, and this experience is bliss. The bird, while taking its flight in the sky, experiences at every beat of its wings that the sky is boundless, that its wings can never carry it beyond. Therein lies its joy. In the cage the sky is limited; it may be quite enough for all the purposes of the bird's life, only it is not more than is necessary. The bird cannot rejoice within the limits of the necessary. It must feel that what it has is immeasurably more than it ever can want or comprehend, and then only can it be glad.

Thus our soul must soar in the infinite, and she must feel every moment that in the sense of not being able to come to the end of her attainment is her supreme joy, her final freedom.

Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God. They make it easier for him to part with all that he has, not excepting his life. His existence is miserable and sordid till he finds some great idea which can truly claim his all, which can release him from all attachment to his belongings. Buddha and Jesus, and all our great prophets, : represent such great ideas. They hold before us opportunities for surrendering our all. When they bring forth their divine alms-bowl we feel we cannot help giving, and we find that in giving is our truest joy and liberation, for it is uniting ourselves to that extent with the infinite.

Man is not complete; he is yet to be. In what he is he is small, and if we could conceive him :topping there for eternity we should have an idea of the most awful hell that man can imagine. His is to be he is infinite, there is his heaven, his deliverance. His is is occupied every moment with what it can get and have done with; his to be is hungering for something which is more than can be got, which he never can lose because he never has possessed.

The finite pole of our existence has its place in the world of necessity. There man goes about searching for food to live, clothing to get warmth. In this region-the region of nature-it is his function to go get things. The natural man is occupied with enlarging his possessions.

But this act of getting is partial. It is limited to man's necessities. We can have a thing only to the extent of our requirements, just as a vessel can contain water only to the extent of its emptiness. Our relation to food is only in feeding, our relation to a house is only in habitation. We call it a benefit when a thing is fitted only to some particular want of ours. Thus to get is always to get partially, and never can be otherwise. So this craving for acquisition belongs to our finite self.

But that side of our existence whose direction is towards the infinite seeks not wealth, but freedom and joy. There the reign of necessity ceases, and there our function is not to get but to be. To be what? To be one with Brahma. For the region of the infinite is the region of unity. Therefore the Upanishads say: *If man apprehends God he becomes true.* Here it is becoming, it is not having more. Words do not gather bulk when you know their meaning; they become true by being one with the idea.

Though the West has accepted as its teacher him who boldly proclaimed his oneness with his Father, and who exhorted his followers to be perfect as God, it has never been reconciled to this idea of. our unity with the infinite being. It condemns, as a piece of blasphemy, any implication of man's becoming God. This idea of absolute transcendence is certainly not that which Christ preached, nor perhaps the idea of the Christian mystics, but this seems to be the idea that has become popular in the Christian west.

But the highest wisdom in the East holds that it is not the function of our soul to gain God, to utilise him for any special material purpose. All that we can ever aspire to is to become more and more one with God. In the region of nature, which is the region of diversity, we grow by acquisition; in the spiritual world, which is the region of unity, we grow by losing ourselves, by uniting. Gaining a thing, as we have said, is by its nature partial, it is limited only to a particular want; but *being is* complete, it belongs to our wholeness, it springs not from any necessity but from our affinity with the infinite, which is the principle of perfection that we have in our soul.

Yes, we must become Brahma. We must not shrink from avowing this. Our existence is meaningless if we never can expect to realise the highest perfection that there is. If we have an aim and yet can never reach it, then it is no aim at all.

But can it then be said that there is no difference between Brahma and our individual soul? Of course the difference is obvious. Call it illusion or ignorance, or whatever name you may give it, it is there. You can offer explanations but you cannot explain it away. Even illusion is true as illusion.

Brahma is Brahma, he is the infinite ideal of perfection: But we are not what we truly are; we are ever to become true, ever to become Brahma. There is the eternal play of love in the relation between this being and the becoming; and in the

depth of this mystery is the source of all truth and beauty that sustains the endless march of creation.

In the music of the rushing stream sounds the joyful assurance, 'I shall become the sea.' It is not a vain assumption; it is true humility, for it is the truth. The river has no other alternative. on both sides of its banks it has numerous fields and forests, villages and towns; it can serve them in various ways, cleanse them and feed them, carry their produce from place to place. But it can have only partial relations with these, and however long it may linger among them it remains separate; it never can become a town or a forest.

But it can and does become the sea. The lesser moving water has its affinity with the great motionless water of the ocean. It moves through the thousand objects on its onward course, and its motion finds its finality when it reaches the sea.

The river can become the sea, but she can never make the sea part and parcel of herself. If, by some chance, she has encircled some broad sheet of water and pretends that she has made the sea a part of herself, we at once know that it is not so, that her current is still seeking rest in the great ocean to which it can never set boundaries.

In the same manner, our soul can only become Brahma as the river can become the sea. Everything else she touches at one of her points, then leaves and moves on, but she never can leave Brahma and move beyond him. Once our soul realises her ultimate object of repose in Brahma, all her movements acquire a purpose. It is this ocean of infinite rest which gives significance to endless activities. It is this perfectness of being that lends to the imperfection of becoming that quality of beauty which finds its expression in all poetry, drama, and art.

There must be a complete idea that animates a poem. Every sentence of the poem touches that idea. When the reader realises that pervading idea, as he reads on, then the reading of the poem is full of joy to him. Then every part of the poem becomes radiantly significant by the light of the whole. But if the poem goes on interminably, never expressing the idea of the whole, only throwing off disconnected images, however beautiful, it becomes wearisome and unprofitable in the extreme. The progress of our soul is like a perfect poem. It has an infinite idea which once realised makes all movements full of meaning and joy. But if we detach its movements from that ultimate idea, if we do not see the infinite rest and only see the infinite motion, then existence appears to us a monstrous evil, impetuously rushing towards an unending aimlessness.

I remember in our childhood we had a teacher who used to make us learn by heart the whole book of Sanskrit grammar, which is written in symbols, without explaining their meaning to us. Day after day we went toiling on, but on towards what, we had not the least notion. So, as-regards our lessons, we were in the position, of the pessimist who only counts the breathless activities of the world, but cannot see the infinite repose of the perfection whence these activities are gaining their equilibrium every moment in absolute fitness and harmony. We lose all joy in thus contemplating existence, because we miss the truth. We see the gesticulations of the dancer, and we imagine these are directed by a ruthless tyranny of chance, while we are deaf to the eternal music which makes every one of these gestures inevitably spontaneous and beautiful. These motions are ever glowing into that music of perfection, becoming one with it, dedicating to that melody at every step the multitudinous forms they go on creating.

And this is the truth of our soul, and this is her joy, that she must ever be growing into Brahma, that all her movements should be modulated by this ultimate idea, and all her creations should be given as offerings to the supreme spirit of perfection.

There is a remarkable saying in the Upanishads: I *think not that I know hire well, or that I know him, or- even that I know him not.*[1]

By the process of knowledge we can never know the infinite being. But if he is altogether beyond our reach, then he is absolutely nothing to us. The truth is that we know him not, yet we know him.

This has been explained in another saying of the Upanishads: *From Brahma words come back baffled, as* well as the mind, but he who knows him by the joy of him is free from all fears[2]

Intellectual knowledge is partial, because our intellect is an instrument, it is only a part of us, it can give us information about things which can be divided and analysed, and whose properties can be classified, part by part. But Brahma is perfect, and knowledge which is partial can never be a knowledge of him.

But he can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in its completeness, it is knowing by our whole being. Intellect sets us apart from the things to be known, but love knows its object by fusion. Such knowledge is immediate and admits no doubt. It is the same as knowing our own selves, only more so.

Therefore, as the Upanishads say, mind can never know Brahma, words can never describe him; he can only be known by our soul, by her joy in him, by her love. Or, in other words, we can only come into relation with him by union—union of our whole being. We must be one with our Father, we must be perfect as he is.

But how can that be? There can be no grade in infinite perfection. We cannot grow more and more into Brahma. He is the absolute one, and there can be no more or less in him.

Indeed, the realization of the *pramatman,* the supreme

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1. *Naham manye suvedeti no na vedeti vedacha.*
2. *Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha anandam brahmano vidvan na vibheti kutacchana.*

soul, within *our antaratman, our* inner individual soul, is in a state of absolute completion. We cannot think of it as non-existent and depending on our limited. powers for its gradual construction. If our relation with flee divine were all a thing of our own making, how should we rely on it as true, and how should it lend us support?

Yes, we must know that within us we have that where space and time cease to rule and where the links of evolution are merged in unity. In that everlasting abode of the *atman,* the soul, the revelation of the *paramatman,* the supreme soul, is already complete. Therefore the Upanishads say: *He who knows Brahman, the true, the all-conscious, and the infinite as hidden in the depths of the soul, which is the supreme sky (the inner sky of* consciousness), enjoys all objects of desire in union with the all-knowing Brahman.'

The union is already accomplished. The *paramatman,* the supreme soul, has himself chosen this soul of ours as his bride and the marriage has been completed. The solemn *mantram* has been uttered: *Let thy heart be even as my heart* is.[2] There is no room in this marriage for evolution to act the part of the master of ceremonies. The *eshah,* who cannot otherwise be described than as This, the nameless immediate presence, is ever here in our innermost being. '*This eshah,* or This, is the supreme end of the other this'[3] this *This is* the supreme treasure of the other this',.[4] this *This* is the supreme dwelling of the other this'.[5] 'this *This is* the supreme joy of the other this.'[6] Because the marriage of supreme love has been accomplished in timeless time. And now goes on the endless *lila,* the play of love. He who has been gained in eternity is now being pursued in time and space, in joys and sorrows, in this world and in the worlds beyond: When the soul-bride understands this well, her heart is blissful and at rest. She knows that she, like a river, has attained the ocean of her fulfilment at one end of her being, and at the other end she is ever attaining it; at one end it is eternal rest and completion, at the other it is incessant movement and change. When she knows both ends as inseparably connected, then she knows the world as her own household by the right of knowing the master of the world as her own lord. Then all her services become services of love, all the troubles and tribulations of life come to her as trials triumphantly borne to prove the strength of her love, smilingly to win the wager from her lover. But so long as she remains obstinately in the dark, lifts not her veil, does not recognise her lover, and only knows the world dissociated from him, she serves as a handmaid here, where by right she might reign as a queen; she sways in doubt, and weeps in sorrow and dejection. She *passes from starvation to starvation, from trouble to trouble, and from fear to fear.*[7]

I can never forget that scrap of a song I once heard in the early dawn in the midst of the din of the crowd that had collected for a festival the night before: 'Ferryman, take me across to the other shore!'

In the bustle of all our work there comes out this cry, 'Take me across.' The carter in India sings while driving his cart, Take me across.' The itinerant grocer deals out his goods to his customers and sings, Take me across.'

What is the meaning of this cry? We feel we have not reached our goal; and we know with all our striving and toiling we do not come to the end, we do not attain our object. Like a child dissatisfied with its dolls, our heart cries, 'Not this, not this.' But what is that other? Where is the further shore?

Is it something else than what we have? Is it somewhere else than where we are? Is it to take rest from all our works, to be relieved from all the responsibilities of life?

No, in the very heart of our activities we are seeking for our end. We are crying for the across, even where we stand. So, while our lips utter their prayer to be carried away, our busy hands are never idle.

In truth, thou ocean of joy, this shore and the other shore are one and the same in thee. When I call this my own, the other lies estranged; and missing the sense of that completeness which is in me, my heart incessantly cries out for the other. All my this, and that other, are waiting to be completely reconciled in thy love.

This 'I' of mine toils hard, day and night, for a home which it knows as it own. Alas, there will be no end of its sufferings so long as it is not able to call this home thine. Till then it will struggle on, and its heart will ever cry, 'Ferryman, lead me across.' When this home of mine is made thine, that very moment is it taken across, even while its old walls enclose it. This 'I' is restless. It is working for a gain which can never be assimilated with its spirit, which it never can hold and retain. In its efforts to clasp in its own arms that which is for all, it hurts others and is hurt in its turn, and cries, 'Lead me across.'But as soon as it is able to say, 'All my work is thine,' everything remains the same, only it is taken across.

Where can I meet thee unless in this my home made thine? Where can I join thee unless in this my work transformed into thy work? If leave my home I shall not reach thy home; if I cease my work I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwellest in me and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing.

Therefore, in the midst of our home and our work, the prayer rises, 'Lead me across:' For here rolls the sea, and even here lies the other shore waiting to be reached-yes, here is this everlasting present, not distant, not anywhere else.

11

Lover's Gift

11

Lover's Gift

1

YOU allowed your kingly power to vanish, Shajahan, but your wish was to make imperishable a tear-drop of love.

Time has no pity for the human heart, he laughs at its sad struggle to remember.

You allured him with beauty, made him captive, and crowned the formless death with fadeless form.

The secret whispered in the hush of night to the ear of your love is wrought in the perpetual silence of stone.

Though empires crumble to dust, and centuries are lost in shadows, the marble still sighs to the stars, 'I remember.'

'I remember.'-But life forgets, for she has her call to the Endless: and she goes on her voyage unburdened, leaving her memories to the forlorn forms of beauty.

2

COME TO my garden walk, my love. Pass by the fervid flowers that press themselves on your sight. Pass them by, stopping at some chance joy, that like a sudden wonder of sunset illumines, yet eludes.

For love's gift is shy, it never tells its name, it flits across the shade, spreading a shiver of joy along the dust. Overtake it or miss it for ever. But a gift that can be grasped is merely a frail flower, or a lamp with. a flame that will flicker.

3

THE FRUITS come in crowds into my orchard, they jostle each other. They surge up in the light in an anguish of fullness.

Proudly step into my orchard, my queen, sit there in the shade, pluck the ripe fruits from their stems, and let them yield, to the utmost, their burden of sweetness at your lips.

In my orchard the butterflies shake their wings in the sun, the leaves tremble, the fruits clamour to come to completion.

4

SHE is near to my heart as the meadow-flower to the earth; she is sweet to me as sleep is to tired limbs. My love for her is my life flowing in its fullness, like a river in autumn flood, running with serene abandonment. My songs are one with my love, like the murmur of a stream, that sings with all its waves and currents.

5

I WOULD ask for still more, if I had the sky with all its stars, and the world with its endless riches; but I would be content with the smallest comer of this earth if only she were mine.

6

IN THE light of this thriftless day of spring, my poet, sing of those who pass by and do not linger, who laugh as they run and never look back, who blossom in an hour of unreasoning delight, and fade in a moment without regret.

Do not sit down silently, to tell the beads of your past tears and smiles,-do not stop to pick up the dropped petals from the flowers of overnight, do not go to seek things that evade you, to know the meaning that is not plain,-leave the gaps in your life where they are, for the music to come out of their depths.

7

IT IS little that remains now, the rest was spent in one careless summer. It is just enough to put in a song and sing to you; to weave in a flower-chain gently clasping your wrist; to hang in your ear like a round pink pearl, like a blushing whisper; to risk in a game one evening and utterly lose.

My boat is a frail small thing, not fit for crossing wild waves in the rain. If you but lightly step on it I shall gently row you by the shelter of the shore, where the dark water in ripples are like a dreamruffled sleep; where the dove's cooing from the drooping branches makes the noonday shadows plaintive. At the day's end, when you are tired, I shall pluck a dripping lily to put in your hair and take my leave.

8

THERE IS ROOM for you. You are alone with your few sheaves of rice. My boat is crowded, it is heavily laden, but how can I turn you away? Your young body is slim and swaying; there is a twinkling smile in the edge of your eyes, and your robe is coloured like the rain-cloud.

The travellers will land for different roads and homes. You will sit for a while on the prow of my boat, and at the journey's end none will keep you back.

Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves? I will not question you, but when I fold my sails and moor my boat, I shall sit and wonder in the evening,-Where do you go, and to what home, to garner your sheaves?

9

WOMAN, your basket is heavy, your limbs are tired. For what distance have you set out, with what hunger of profit[7] The way is long and the dust is hot in the sun.

See, the lake is deep and full, its water dark like a crow's eye. The banks are sloping and tender with grass.

Dip your tired feet into the water. The noon-tide wind will pass its fingers through your hair; the pigeons will croon their sleep songs, the leaves will murmur the secrets that nestle in the shadows.

What matters it if the hours pass and the sun sets; if the way through the desolate land be lost in the waning light.

Yonder is my house, by the hedge of flowering *henna*: I will guide you. I will make a bed for you, and light a lamp. In the morning when the birds are roused by the stir of milking the cows, I will waken you.

10

WHAT IS it that drives these bees from their home; these followers of unseen trails? What cry is this in their eager wings? How can they hear the music that sleeps in the flower soul? How can they find their way to the chamber where the honey lies shy and silent ?

11

IT was only the budding of leaves in the summer, the summer that came into the garden by the sea. It was only a stir and rustle in the south wind, a few lazy snatches of songs, and then the day was done.

But let there be flowering of love in the summer to come in the garden by the sea. Let my joy take its birth and clap its hands and dance with the surging songs, and make the morning open its eyes wide in sweet amazement.

12

AGES ago when you opened the south gate or the garden of gods, and came down upon the first youth of the earth, O Spring; men and women rushed out of their houses, laughing and dancing, and pelting each other with flower-dust in a sudden madness of mirth.

Year-after year you bring the same flowers that you scattered in your path in that earliest April. Therefore, to-day, in their pervading perfume, they breathe the sigh of the days that are now dreams the clinging sadness of vanished worlds. Your breeze is laden with lovelegends that have faded from all human language.

One day, with fresh wonder, you came into my life that was fluttered with its first love. Since then the tender timidness of that inexperienced joy comes hidden every year in the early green buds of your lemon flowers; your red roses carry in their burning silence all that was unutterable in me: the memory of lyric hours, those days of May, rustles in the thrill of your new leaves born again and again.

13

LAST night in the garden I offered you my youth's foaming wine. You lifted the cup to your lips, you shut your eyes and smiled while I raised your veil, unbound your tresses, drawing down upon my breast your face sweet with its silence, last night when the moon's dream overflowed the world of slumber.

To-day in the dew-cooled calm of the dawn you are walking to God's temple, bathed and robed white, with a basketful of flowers in your hand. I stand aside in the shade under the tree, with my head bent, in the calm of the dawn by the lonely road to the temple.

14

IF I am impatient to-day, forgive me, my love. It is the first summer rain, and the riverside forest is aflutter, and the blossoming *kadam* trees, are tempting the passing winds with wine-cups of perfume. See, from all corners of the sky lightnings are darting their glances, and winds are rampant in your hair.

If to-day I bring my homage to you, forgive me, my love. The everyday world is hidden in the dimness of the rain, all work has stopped in the village, the meadows are desolate. In your dark eyes the coming of the rain finds its music, and it is at your door that July waits with jasmines for your hair in its blue skirt.

15

HER NEIGHBOURS call her dark in the village-but she is a lily to my heart, yes, a lily though not fair. Light came muffled with clouds, when first I saw her in the field; her head was bare, her veil was off, her braided hair hanging loose on her neck. She may be dark as they say in the village, but I have seen her black eyes and am glad.

The pulse of the air boded storm. She rushed out of the hut, when she heard her dappled cow low in dismay. For a moment she turned her large eyes to the clouds, and felt a stir of the coming rain in the sky. I stood at the corner of the ricefield.-if she noticed me, it was known only to her (and perhaps I know it). She is dark as the message of shower in summer, dark as the shade of flowering woodland; she is dark as the longing for unknown love in the wistful night of May.

16

SHE DWELT here by the pool with its landing-stairs in ruins.

Many an evening she had watched the moon made dizzy by the shaking of bamboo leaves, and on many a rainy day the smell of the wet earth had come to her over the young shoots of rice.

Her pet name is known here among those date-palm groves, and in the court-yards where girls sit and talk, while stitching their winter quilts. The water in this pool keeps in its depth the memory of her swimming limbs, and her wet feet had left their marks, day after day, on the footpath leading to the. village.

The women who come to-day with their vessels to the water, have all seen her smile over simple jests, and the old peasant, taking his bullocks to their bath, used to stop at her door every day to greet her.

Many a sailing boat passes by this village; many a traveller takes rest beneath that banyan tree; the ferry boat crosses to yonder ford ,carrying crowds to the market; but they never notice this spot by the village road, near the pool with its ruined landing-stairs,- where dwelt she whom I love.

17

WHILE ages passed and the bees haunted the summer gardens, the moon smiled to the lilies of the night, the lightnings flashed their fiery kisses to the clouds and fled laughing, the poet stood in a corner, one with the trees and clouds. He kept his heart silent, like a flower, watched through his dreams as does the crescent moon; and wandered like the summer breeze for no purpose.

One April evening, when the moon rose up like a bubble from the depth of the sunset; and one maiden was busy watering the plants; and one feeding her doe, and one making her peacock dance, the poet broke out singing,-'O listen to the secrets of the world. I know that the lily is pale for the moon's love. The lotus draws her veil aside before the morning sun, and the reason is simple if you think. The meaning of the bee's hum in the ear of the early jasmine has escaped the learned, but the poet knows.'

The sun went down in a blaze of blush, the moon loitered behind the trees, and the south wind whispered to the lotus, that the poet was not as simple as he seemed. The maidens and youths clapped their hands and cried; 'The world's secret is out.' They looked into each other's eyes and sang-'Let our secret as well be flung into the winds.'

18

YOUR days will be full of cares, if you must give me your heart. My house by the cross-roads has its doors open and my mind is absent for I sing.

I shall never be made to answer for it, if you must give me your heart. If I pledge my word to you in tunes now, and am too much in earnest to keep it when music is silent, you must forgive me; for the law laid in May is best broken in December.

Do not always keep remembering it, if you must give me your heart. When your eyes sing with love, and your voice ripples with laughter, my answers to your questions will be wild, and not miserly accurate in facts,-they are to be believed for ever and then forgotten for good.'

19

IT IS written in the book, that Man, when fifty, must leave the noisy world, to go to the forest seclusion. But the poet proclaims that only for the young is the forest hermit age. For it is the birthplace of flowers, and the haunt of birds and bees; and hidden nooks are waiting there for the thrill of lover's whispers. There the moonlight, that is all one kiss for the *malati* flowers, has its deep message, but those who understand it are far below fifty.

And alas, youth is inexperienced and wilful, therefore it is but meet, that the old should take charge of the household, and the young take to the seclusion of forest shades, and the severe discipline of courting.

20

WHERE is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the learned muddle the summer breeze with their snuff; where dispute is unending if the oil depend upon the cask, or the cask upon the oil; where yellow manuscripts frown upon the fleet-footed frivolousness of life? My song cries out, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the man of fortune "grows enormous in pride and flesh in his marble palace, with his books on the shelves, dressed in leather, painted in gold, dusted by slaves, their virgin pages dedicated to the god obscure? My song gasped and said, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the young student sits, with his head bent upon his books, and his mind straying in youth's dreamland; where prose is prowling on the desk, and poetry hiding in the heart? There among that dusty disorder would you care to play hide-and-seek? My song remains silent in shy hesitation.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the bride is busy in the house, where she runs to her bedroom the moment she is free, and snatches, from under her pillows, the book of romance so roughly handled by the baby, so full of the scent of her hair? My song heaves a sigh and trembles with uncertain desire.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the least of a bird's notes is never missed, where the stream's babbling finds its full wisdom, where all the lute-strings of the world shower their music upon two fluttering hearts? My song bursts out and cries Yes yes.

21

(From the Bengali of Devendranath Sen)

METHINKS my love, before the daybreak of life you stood under some waterfall of happy dreams, filling your blood with its liquid turbulence. Or, perhaps, your path was through the garden of the gods, where the merry multitude of jasmine, lilies, and oleanders fell in your arms in heaps, and entering your heart became boisterous.

Your laughter is a song whose words are drowned in the clamour of tune, a rapture of odour of flowers that are not seen; it is like the moonlight breaking through your lips' window when the moon is hiding in your heart. I ask for no reason, I forget the cause, I only know that your laughter is the tumult of insurgent life.

22

I SHALL, gladly suffer the pride of culture to die out in my house, if only in some fortunate future I am born a herd boy in the Brinda forest.

The herd boy who grazes his cattle sitting under the banyan tree, and idly weaves gunja flowers into garlands, who loves to splash and plunge in the Jamuna's muna's cool deep stream.

He calls his companions to wake up when morning dawns, and all the houses in the lane hum with the sound of the churn, clouds of dust are raised by the cattle, the maidens come out in the courtyard to milk the kine.

As the shadows deepen under the tomal trees, and the dusk gathers on the river-banks; when the milkmaids, while crossing the turbulent water tremble with fear; and loud peacocks, with tails outspread, dance in the forest, he watches the summer clouds.

When the April night is sweet as a fresh-blown flower, he disappears in the forest with a peacock's plume in his hair; the swing ropes are twined with flowers on the branches; the south wind throbs with music, and the merry shepherd boys crowd on the banks of the blue river.

No. I will never be the leader, brothers, of this new age of new Bengal; I shall not trouble to light the lamp of culture for the benighted. If only I could be born, under the shady Ashoka groves, in some village of Brinda, where milk is churned by the maidens.

23

I LOVED the sandy bank where, in the lonely pools, ducks clamoured and turtles basked in the sun; where, with evening, stray fishing-boats took shelter in the shadow by the tall grass.

You loved the wooded bank where shadows were gathered in the arms of the bamboo thickets; where women came with their vessels through the winding lane.

The same river flowed between us, singing the same song to both its banks. I listened to it, lying alone on the sand under the stars; and you listened sitting by the edge of the slope in the early morning light. Only the words I heard from it you did not know and the secret it spoke to you was a mystery for ever to me.

24

YOUR WINDOW half opened and veil half raised you stand there waiting for the bangle-seller to come with his tinse. You idly watch the heavy cart creak on in the dusty road, and the boat-mast crawling along the horizon across the far-off river.

The world to you is like an old woman's chant at her spinningwheel, unmeaning rhymes crowded with random images.

But who knows if he is on his way this lazy sultry noon, the Stranger, carrying his basket of strange wares.

He will pass by your door with his clear cry, and you shall fling open your window, cast off your veil, come out of the dusk of your dreams and meet your destiny.

25

I CLASP your hands, and my heart plunges into the dark of your eyes, seeking you, who ever evade me behind words and silence.

Yet I know that I must be content in my love, with what is fitful and fugitive. For we have met for a moment in the crossing of the roads. Have I the power to carry you through this crowd of worlds, through this maze of paths? Have I the food that can sustain you, across the dark passage gaping with arches of death?

26

IF, BY chance you think of me, I shall sing to you when the rainy evening loosens her shadows upon the river, slowly trailing her dim light towards the west; when the day's remnant is too narrow for work or for play.

You will sit alone in the balcony of the south, and I shall sing from the darkened room. In the growing dusk, the smell of the wet leaves will come through the window; and the stormy winds will become clamorous in the coconut grove.

When the lighted lamp is brought into the room I shall go. And then, perhaps, you will listen to the night, and hear my song when I am silent.

27

I FILLED my tray with whatever I had, and gave it to

you. What shall I bring to your feet tomorrow, I wonder. I am like the tree that, at the end of the flowering summer, gazes at the sky with its lifted branches bare of their blossoms.

But in all my past offerings is there not a single flower made fadeless by the eternity of tears?

Will you remember it and thank me with your eyes when I stand before you with empty hands at the leave-taking of my summer days?

28

I DREAMT that she sat by my head, tenderly ruffling my hair with her fingers, playing the melody of her touch. I looked at her face and struggled with my tears, till the agony of unspoken words burst my sleep like a bubble.

I sat up and saw the glow of the milky way above my window, like a world of silence on fire, and I wondered if at this moment she had a dream that rhymed with mine.

29

I THOUGHT I had something to say to her when our eyes met across the hedge. But she passed away. And it rocks day and night, like a boat, on every wave of the hours the word that I had to say to her. It seems to sail in the autumn clouds in an endless quest and to bloom into evening flowers seeking its lost moment in the sunset. It twinkles like fireflies in my heart to find its meaning in the dusk of despair the word that I had to say to her.

30

THE SPRING flowers break out like the passionate pain of unspoken love. With their breath comes the memory of my old day songs. My heart of a sudden has put on green leaves of desire. My love came not but her touch is in my limbs, and her voice comes across the fragrant fields. Her gaze is in the sad depth of the sky, but where are her eyes? Her kisses flit in the air, but where are her lips?

31

A Posy

(From the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta)

MY flowers were like milk and honey and wine; I bound them into a posy with a golden ribbon, but they escaped my watchful care and fled away and only the ribbon remains.

My songs were like milk and honey and wine, they were held in the rhythm of my beating heart, but they spread their wings and fled away, the darlings of the idle hours, and my heart beats in silence.

The beauty I loved was like milk and honey" and wine, her lips like the rose of the dawn, her eyes bee-black. I kept my heart silent lest it should startle her, but she eluded me like my flowers and like my songs, and my love remains alone.

32

MANY A TIME when the spring day knocked at our door I kept busy with my work and you did not answer. Now when I am left alone and heartsick the spring day comes once again, but I know not how to turn him away from the door. When he came to crown us with joy the gate was shut, but now when he comes with his gift of sorrow his path must be open.

33

THE BOISTEROUS spring, who once came into my life with its lavish laughter, burdening her hours with improvident roses, setting skies aflame with the red kisses of new-born *ashoka* leaves, now comes stealing into my solitude through the lonely lanes along the brooding shadows heavy with silence, and sits still in my balcony gazing across the fields, where the green of the earth swoons exhausted in the utter paleness of the sky.

34

WHEN OUR farewell moment came, like a low-hanging rain cloud, I had only time to tie a red ribbon on your wrist, while my hands trembled. Today I sit alone on the grass in the season of mahua flowers, with one quivering question in my mind, 'Do you still keep the little red ribbon tied on your wrist?'

You went by the narrow road that skirted the blossoming field of flax. I saw that my garland of overnight was still hanging loose from your hair. But why did you not wait till I could gather, in the morning, new flowers for my final gift? I wonder if unaware it dropped on your way,-the garland hanging loose from your hair.

Many a song I had sung to you, morning and evening, and the last one you carried in your voice when you went away. You never tarried to hear the one song unsung I had for you alone and for. ever. I wonder if, at last, you are tired of my song that you hummed to yourself while walking through the field.

35

LAST night clouds were threatening and *amlak* branches struggled in the grips of the gusty wind. I hoped, if dreams came to me, they would come in the shape of my beloved, in the lonely night loud with rain.

The winds still moan through the fields, and the tear-stained cheeks of dawn are pale. My dreams have been in

vain, for truth is hard, and dreams, too, have their own ways.

Last night when the darkness was drunken with storm, and the rain, like night's veil, was torn by the winds into shreds, would it make truth jealous, if untruth came to me in the shape of my beloved, in the starless night loud with rain?

36

MY FETTERS, you made music in my heart. I played with you all day long and made you my ornament. We were the best of friends, my fetters. There were times when I was afraid of you, but my fear made me love you the more. You were companions of my long dark night, and I make my bow to you, before I bid you good-bye, my fetters.

37

YOU HAD your rudder broken many a time, my boat, and your sails torn to tatters. Often had you drifted towards the sea, dragging anchor and heeded not. But now there has spread a crack in your hull and your hold is heavy. Now is the time for you to end your voyage, to be rocked into sleep by the lapping of the water by the beach.

Alas, I know all warning is vain. The veiled face of dark doom lures you. The madness of the storm and the waves is upon you. The music of the tide is rising high. You are shaken by the fever of that dance.

Then break your chain, my boat, and be free, and fearlessly rush to your wreck.

38

THE CURRENT in which I drifted ran rapid and strong when I was young. The spring breeze was spendthrift of itself, the trees were on fire with flowers; and the birds never slept from singing.

I sailed with giddy speed, carried away by the flood of passion; I had no time to see and feel and take the world into my being.

Now that youth has ebbed and I am stranded or, the bank, I can hear the deep music of all things, and the sky opens to me its heart of stars.

39

THERE IS a looker-on who sits behind my eyes. It seems he has seen things in ages and worlds beyond memory's shore, and those forgotten sights glisten on the grass, and shiver on the leaves. He has seen under new veils the face of the one beloved, in twilight hours of many a nameless star. Therefore his sky seems to ache with the pain of countless meetings and partings, and a longing pervades this spring breeze,-the longing that is full of the whisper of ages without beginning.

40

A MESSAGE came from my youth of vanished days, saying, 'I wait for you among the quiverings of unborn May, where smiles ripen for tears and hours ache with songs unsung.'

It says, 'Come to me across the worn-out track of age, through the gates of death. For dreams fade, hopes fail, the gathered fruits of the year decay, but I am the eternal truth, and you shall meet me again and again in your voyage of life from shore to shore.'

41

THE GIRLS are out to fetch water from the river- their laughter comes through the trees, I long to join them in the lane, where goats graze in the shade, and squirrels flit from sun to shadow, across the fallen leaves.

But my day's task is already done, my jars are filled. I stand at my door to watch the glistening green of the areca leaves, and hear the laughing women going to fetch water from the river.

It has ever been dear to me to carry the burden of my full vessel day after day, in the dew-dipped morning freshness and in the tired glimmer of the dayfall.

Its gurgling water babbled to me when my mind was idle, it laughed with the silent laughter of my joyous thoughts- it spoke to my heart with tearful sobs when I was sad. I have carried it in stormy days, when the loud rain drowned the anxious cooing of doves.

My day's task is done, my jars are filled, the light wanes in the west, and shadows gather beneath the trees; a sigh comes from the flowering linseed field, and my wistful eyes follow the lane, that runs through the village to the bank of the dark water.

42

ARE you a mere picture, and not as true as those stars, true as this dust? They throb with the pulse of things, but you are immensely aloof in your stillness, painted form.

The day was when you walked with me, your breath warm, your limbs singing of life. My world found its speech in your voice, and touched my heart with your face. You suddenly stopped in your walk, in the shadow-side of the Forever, and I went on alone.

Life, like a child, laughs, shaking its rattle of death as it runs; it beckons me on, I follow the unseen; but you stand there, where you stopped behind that dust and those stars; and you are a mere picture.

No, it cannot be. Had the life flood utterly stopped in you, it would stop the river in its flow, and the footfall of

dawn in her cadence of colours. Had the glimmering dusk of your hair vanished in the hopeless dark, the woodland shade of summer would die with its dreams.

Can it be true that I forgot you? We haste on without heed, forgetting the flowers on the roadside hedge. Yet they breathe unaware into our forgetfulness, filling it with music. You have moved from my world, to take seat at the root of my life, and therefore is this forgetting-remembrance lost in its own depth.

You are no longer before my songs, but one with them. You came to me with the first ray of dawn. I lost you with the last gold of evening. Ever since I am always finding you through the dark. No, you are no mere picture.

43

DYING, you have left behind you the great sadness of the Eternal in my life. You have painted my thought's horizon with the sunset colours of your departure, leaving a track of tears across the earth to love's heaven. Clasped in your dear arms, life and death united in me in a marriage bond.

I think I can see you watching there in the balcony with your lamp lighted, where the end and the beginning of all things meet. My world went hence through the doors that you opened-you holding the cup of death to my lips, filling it with life from your own.

44

WHEN in your death you died to all that was outside me, vanishing from the thousand things of the world, to be fully reborn in my sorrow, I felt that my life had grown perfect, the man and the woman becoming one in me for ever.

45

BRING beauty and order into my forlorn life, woman, as you brought them into my house when you lived. Sweep away the dusty fragments of the hours, fill the empty jars and mend all neglects. Then open the inner door of the shrine, light the candle, and let us meet there in silence before our God.

46

THE SKY gazes on its own endless blue and dreams. We clouds are its whims, we have no home. The stars shine on the crown of Eternity. Their records are permanent, while ours are penciled, to be rubbed off the next moment Our part is to appear on the stage of the air to sound our tambourines and fling flashes of laughter. But from our laughter comes the rain, which is real enough, and thunder which is no jest. Yet we have no claim upon Time for wages, and the breath that blew us into being blows us away before we are given a name.

47

THE road is my wedded companion. She speaks to me under my feet all day, she sings to my dreams all night.

My meeting with her had, no beginning, it begins endlessly at each daybreak, renewing its summer in fresh flowers and songs, and her every new kiss is the first kiss to me.

The road and I are lovers. I change my dress for her night after night, leaving the tattered cumber of the old in the wayside inns when the day dawns.

48

I TRAVELLED the old road every day, l took my fruits to the market, my cattle to the meadows, I ferried my boat across the stream and all the ways were well known to me.

One morning my basket was heavy with wares. Men were busy in the fields, the pastures crowded with cattle; the breast of earth heaved with the mirth of ripening rice.

Suddenly there was a tremor in the air, and the sky seemed to kiss me on my forehead. My mind started up like the morning out of mist.

I forgot to follow the track. I stepped a few paces from the path, and my familiar world appeared strange to me, like a flower I had only known in bud.

My everyday wisdom was ashamed. I went astray in the fairyland of things. It was the best luck of my life, that I lost my path that morning, and found my eternal childhood.

49

WHERE is heaven? you ask me, my child,-the sages tell us it is beyond the limits of birth and death, unswayed by the rhythm of day and night; it is not of this earth.

But your poet knows that its eternal hunger is for time and space, and it strives evermore to be born in the fruitful dust. Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your palpitating heart.

The sea is beating its drums in joy, the flowers are a-tiptoe to kiss you. For heaven is born in you, in the arms of the mother-dust.

50

The Child

(Translated from the Bengali of Dwijendralal Roy)

COME, moon, come down, kiss my darling on the forehead,' cries the mother as she holds the baby girl in her lap while the moon smiles as it dreams. There come stealing

in the dark the vague fragrance of the summer and the night-bird's songs from the shadow-laden solitude of the mango-grove. At a faraway village rises from a peasant's flute a fountain of plaintive notes, and the young mother, sitting on the terrace, baby in her lap, croons sweetly, 'Come, moon, come down, kiss my darling on the forehead.' Once she looks up at the light of the sky, and then at the light of the earth in her arms, and I wonder at the placid silence of the moon.

The baby laughs and repeats her mother's call, 'Come, moon, come down.' The mother smiles, and smiles the moonlit night, and I, the poet, the husband of the baby's mother, watch this picture from behind, unseen.

51

THE EARLY autumn day is cloudless. The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of the tottering tree by the ford. The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the village, dips down into the stream.

My heart is full, as I look around me and see the silent sky and the flowing water, and feel that happiness is spread abroad, as simply as a smile on a child's face.

52

TIRED OF waiting, you burst your bonds, impatient flowers, before the winter had gone. Glimpses of the unseen comer reached your wayside watch, and you rushed out running and panting, impulsive jasmines, troops of riotous roses.

You were the first to march to the breach of death, your clamour of colour and perfume troubled the air. You laughed and pressed and pushed each other, bared your breast and dropped in heaps.

The Summer will come in its time, sailing in the floodtide of the south wind. But you never counted slow moments to be sure of him. You recklessly spent your all in the road, in the terrible joy of faith.

You heard his footsteps from afar, and flung your mantle of death for him to tread upon. Your bonds break even before the rescuer is seen, you make him your own ere he can come and claim you.

53

Champa

(Translated from the Bengali of Satyendranath Datta)

I OPENED my bud when April breathed her last and the summer scorched with kisses the unwilling earth. I came half afraid and half curious, like a mischievous imp peeping at a hermit's cell.

I heard the frightened whispers of the despoiled woodland, and the *Kokil* gave voice to the languor of the summer; through the fluttering leaf curtain of my birth-chamber I saw the world grim, grey, and haggard.

Yet boldly I came out strong with the faith of youth, quaffed the fiery wine from the glowing bowl of the sky, and proudly saluted the morning, I, the champa flower, who carry the perfume of the sun in my heart.

54

IN THE BEGINNING of time, there rose from the churning of God's dream two women. One is the dancer at the court of paradise, the desired of men, she who laughs and plucks the minds of the wise from their cold meditations and of fools from their emptiness; and scatters them like seeds with careless hands in the extravagant winds of March, in the flowering frenzy of May.

The other is the crowned queen of heaven, the mother, throned on the fullness of golden autumn; she who in the harvesttime brings straying hearts to the smile sweet as tears, the beauty deep as the sea of silence,-brings them to the temple of the Unknown, at the holy confluence of Life and Death.

55

THE NOONDAY air is quivering, like gauzy wings of a dragon-fly. Roofs of the village huts brood bird like over the drowsy households, while a Kokil sings unseen from its leafy loneliness.

The fresh liquid notes drop upon the tuneless toil of the human crowd, adding music to lovers' whispers, to mothers' kisses, to children's laughter. They flow over our thoughts, like a stream over pebbles, rounding them in beauty every unconscious moment.

56

THE EVENING was lonely for me, and I was reading a book till my heart became dry, and it seemed to me that beauty was a thing fashioned by the traders in words. Tired I shut the book and snuffed the candle. In a moment the room was flooded with moonlight.

Spirit of Beauty, how could you, whose radiance over brims the sky, stand hidden behind a candle's tiny flame? How could a few vain words from a book rise like a mist, and veil her whose voice has hushed the heart of earth into ineffable calm?

This autumn is mine, for she was rocked in my heart. The glistening bells of her anklets rang in my blood, and her misty veil fluttered in my breath. I know the touch of her blown hair in all my dreams. She is abroad in the trembling leaves that danced in my lifethrobs, and her eyes that smile from the blue sky drank their light from me.

58

THINGS THRONG and laugh loud in the sky; the sands and dust dance and whirl like children. Man's mind is aroused by their shouts; his thoughts long to be the playmates of things.

Our dreams, drifting in the stream of the vague, stretch their arms to clutch the earth,-their efforts stiffen into bricks and stones, and thus the city of man is built.

Voices come swarming from the past,-seeking answers from the living moments. Beats of their wings fill the air with tremulous shadows, and sleepless thoughts in our minds leave their nests to take flight across the desert of dimness, in the passionate thirst for forms. They are lampless pilgrims, seeking the shore of light, to find themselves in things. They will be lured into poet's rhymes, they will be housed in the towers of the town not yet planned, they have their call to arms from the battlefields of the future, they are bidden to join hands in the strifes of peace yet to come.

59

THEY DO not build high towers in the Land of All-I-Have-Found. A grassy lawn runs by the road, with a stream of fugitive water at its side. The bees haunt the cottage porches abloom with passion flowers. The men set out on their errands with a smile, and in the evening they come home with a song, with no wages, in the Land of All-I-Have-Found

In the midday, sitting in the cool of their courtyards, the women hum and spin at their wheels, while over the waving harvest comes wafted the music of shepherds' flutes. It rejoices the wayfarers' hearts who walk singing through the shimmering shadows of the fragrant forest in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

The traders sail with their merchandise down the river, but they do not moor their boats in this land; soldiers march with banners flying, but the king never stops his chariot. Travellers who come from afar to rest here awhile, go away without knowing what there is in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

Here crowds do not jostle each other in the roads. O poet, set up your house in this land. Wash from your feet the dust of distant wanderings, tune your lute, and at the day's end stretch yourself on the cool grass under the evening star in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

60

TAKE BACK your coins, King's Councillor. I am of those women you sent to the forest shrine to decoy the young ascetic who had never seen a woman. I failed in your bidding.

Dimly day was breaking when the hermit boy came to bathe in the stream, his tawny locks crowded on his shoulders, like a cluster of morning clouds, and his limbs shining like a streak of sunbeam. We laughed and sang as we rowed in our boat; we jumped into the river in a mad frolic, and danced around him, when the sun rose staring at us from the water's edge in a flush of divine anger.

Like a child-god, the boy opened his eyes and watched our movements, the wonder deepening till his eyes shone like morning stars. He lifted his clasped hands and chanted a hymn of praise in his bird-like young voice, thrilling every leaf of the forest. Never such words were sung to a mortal woman before; they were like the silent hymn to the dawn which rises from the hushed hills. The women hid their mouths with their hands, their bodies swaying with laughter, and a spasm of doubt ran across his face. Quickly came I to his side, sorely pained, and, bowing to his feet, I said, 'Lord, accept my service.'

I led him to the grassy bank, wiped his body with the end of my silken mantle, and, kneeling on the ground, I dried his feet with my trailing hair. When I raised my face and looked into his eyes, I thought I felt the world's first kiss to the first woman,-Blessed am I, blessed is God, who made me a woman. I heard him say to me, 'What God unknown are you? Your touch is the touch of the Immortal, your eyes have the mystery of the midnight.'

Ah, no, not that smile, King's Councillor,-the dust of worldly wisdom has covered your sight, old man. But this boy's innocence pierced the mist and saw the shining truth, the woman divine.

Ah, how the goddess wakened in me, at the awful light of that first adoration. Tears filled my eyes, the morning ray caressed my hair like a sister, and the woodland breeze kissed my forehead as it kisses the flowers.

The women clapped their hands, and laughed their obscene laugh, and with veils dragging on the dust and hair hanging loose, they began to pelt him with flowers.

Alas, my spotless sun, could not my shame weave fiery mist to cover you in its folds? I fell at his feet and cried, 'Forgive me.' I fled like a stricken deer through shade and sun, and cried as I fled, 'Forgive me.' The women's foul laughter pressed me like a crackling fire, but the words ever rang in my ears, 'What God unknown are you?'

12

CREATIVE UNITY

Introduction

IT costs me nothing to feel that I am; it is no burden to me. And yet if the mental, physical, chemical, and other innumerable facts concerning all branches of knowledge which have united in myself could be broken up, they would prove endless. It is some untold mystery of unity in me, that has the simplicity of the infinite and reduces the immense mass of multitude to a single point.

This One in me knows the universe of the many. But, in whatever it knows, it knows the One in different aspects. It knows this room only because this room is One to it, in ;spite of the seeming contradiction of the endless facts contained in the single fact of the room. Its knowledge of a tree is the knowledge of a unity, which appears in the aspect of a tree.

This One in me is creative. Its creations are a pastime, through which it gives expression to an ideal of unity in its endless show of variety. Such are its pictures, poems, music, in which it finds joy only because they reveal the perfect forms of an inherent unity.

This One in me slot only seeks unity in knowledge for its understanding and creates images of unity for its delight; it also seeks union in love for its fulfillment. It seeks itself in others. This is a fact, which would be absurd had there been no great medium of truth to give it reality. In love we find a joy which is ultimate because it is the ultimate truth. Therefore it is said in the Upanishads that the *advaitam* is *anandam,*-'the One is Infinite'; that the *advaitam* is anandam,-'the One is Love.'

To give perfect expression to the One, the infinite, through the harmony of the many; to the One, the Love, through the sacrifice of self, is the object alike of our individual life and our society.

The Poet's Religion

I

CIVILITY is beauty of behaviour. It requires for its perfection patience, self control, and an environment of leisure. For genuine courtesy is a creation, like pictures, like music. It is a harmonious blending of voice, gesture and movement, words and action, in which generosity of conduct is expressed. It reveals the man himself and has no ulterior purpose.

Our needs are always in a hurry. They rush and hustle, they are rude and unceremonious; they have no surplus of leisure, no patience for anything else but fulfillment of purpose. We frequently see in our country at the present day men utilising empty kerosene cans for carrying water. These cans are emblems of discourtesy; they are curt and abrupt, they have not the least shame for their unmannerliness, they do not care to be ever so slightly more than useful.

The instruments of our necessity assert that we must have food, shelter, clothes, comforts and convenience. And yet men spend an immense amount of their time and resources in contradicting this assertion, to prove that they are not a mere living catalogue of endless wants; that there is in them an ideal of perfection, a sense of unity, which is a harmony between parts and a harmony with surroundings.

The quality of the infinite is not the magnitude of extension, it is in the *advaitam,* the mystery of Unity. Fact occupy endless time and space; but the truth comprehending them all has no dimension; it is One. Wherever our heart touches the one, in the small or the big, it finds the touch of the infinite.

I was speaking to some one of the joy we have in our personality. I said it was because we were made conscious by it of a spirit of unity within ourselves. He answered that he had no such feeling of joy about himself, but I was sure he exaggerated. In all probability he had been suffering from some break of harmony between his surroundings and the spirit of unity within him, proving all the more strongly its truth. The meaning of health comes home to us with painful force when disease disturbs it; since health expresses the unity of the vital functions and is accordingly joyful. Life's tragedies occur, not to demonstrate their own reality, but to reveal that eternal principle of joy in life, to which they gave a rude shaking. It is the object of this Oneness in us to realize its infinity by perfect union of love with others. All obstacles to this union create misery, giving rise to the baser passions that are expressions of finitude, of that separateness which is negative and *maya*.

The joy of unity within ourselves, seeking expression, becomes creative; whereas our desire for the fulfilment of our needs is constructive. The water vessel, taken as a vessel only raises the question, 'Why does it exist at all?' Through its fitness of construction, it offers the apology for its

existence. But where it is a work of beauty it has no question to answer; it has nothing to do, but to be. It reveals in its form a unity to which all that seems various in it is so related that, in a mysterious manner, it strikes sympathetic chords to the music of unity in our own being.

What is the truth of this world? It is not in the masses of substance, not in the number of things, but in their relatedness, which neither can be counted, nor measured, nor abstracted. It is not in the materials which are many, but in the expression which is one. All our knowledge of things is knowing them in their relation to the Universe, in that relation which is truth. A drop of water is not a particular assortment of elements; it is the miracle of a harmonious mutuality, in which the two reveal the One. No amount of analysis can reveal to us this mystery of unity. Matter is an abstraction; we shall never be able to realize what it is, for our world of reality does not acknowledge it. Even the giant forces of the world, centripetal and centrifugal, are kept out of our recognition. They are the day-labourers not admitted into the audience-hall of creation. But light and sound come to its in their gay dresses as troubadours singing serenades before the windows of the senses. What is constantly before its, claiming our attention, is not the kitchen, but the feast; not the anatomy of the world, but its countenance. There is the dancing ring of seasons; the elusive play of lights and shadows, of wind and water; the many coloured wings of erratic life flitting between birth and death. The importance of these does not lie in their existence as mere facts, but in their language of harmony, the mother-tongue of our own soul, through which they are communicated to us.

We grow out of touch with this great truth, we forget to accept its invitation and its hospitality, when in quest of external success our works become unspiritual and unexpressive. This is what Wordsworth complained of when he said:

The world is to much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

Little we see in Nature that is ours.

But it is not because the world has grown too familiar to us; on the contrary, it is because we do not see it in its aspect of unity, because we are driven to distraction by our pursuit of the fragmentary.

Materials as materials are savage; they are solitary; they are ready to hurt one another. They are like our individual impulses seeking the unlimited freedom of willfulness. Left to themselves they are destructive. But directly an ideal of unity raises its banner in their center, it brings these rebellious forces under its away and creation is revealed - the creation which is peace, which is the unity of perfect relationship. Our greed for eating is in itself ugly and selfish, it has no sense of decorum; but when brought under the ideal of social fellowship, it is regulated and trade ornamental; it is changed into a daily festivity of life. In human nature sexual passion is fiercely individual and destructive, but dominated by the ideal of love, it has been made to flower into a perfection of beauty, becoming in its best expression symbolical of the spiritual truth in man which is his kinship of love with the Infinite. Thus we find it is the One which expresses itself in creation; and the Many, by giving up opposition, make the revelation of unity perfect.

II

I remember, when I was a child, that a row of coconut trees by our garden wall, with their branches beckoning the rising sun on the horizon, gave me a companionship as living as I was myself. I know it was my imagination which transmuted the world around me into my own world — the imagination which seeks unity, which deals with it. But we have to consider that this companionship was true; that the universe in which I was born had in it an element profoundly akin to my own imaginative mind, one which wakens in all children's natures the Creator, whose pleasure is in interweaving the web of creation with His own patterns of many-coloured stands. It is something akin to us, and therefore harmonious to our imagination. When we find some strings vibrating in unison with others, we know that this sympathy carries in it an eternal reality. The fact that the world stirs our imagination in sympathy tells its that this creative imagination is a common truth both in its and in the heart of existence. Wordsworth says:

I'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed! horn.

In this passage the poet says we are less forlorn in a world which we meet with our imagination. That can only be possible if through our imagination is revealed, behind all appearances, the reality which gives the touch of companionship, that is to say, something which has an affinity us. An immense amount of our activity is engaged in making images not for serving any useful purpose or formulating rational propositions, but for giving varied responses to the varied touches of this reality. In this image-making the child creates his own world in answer to the world in which lie finds himself. The child in us finds glimpses of his eternal playmate from behind the veil of things, as Proteus rising from the sea, or Triton blowing his wreathed horn. And the playmate is the Reality, that makes it possible for the child to find delight in activities which do not inform or bring assistance but merely express. There is alt image-making joy in the infinite, which inspires in us our joy in imagining. The rhythm of cosmic notion produces in our mind the emotion which is creative.

A poet has said about his destiny as a dreamer, about the

worthlessness of his dreams and et their permanence:

I hang 'mid men my heedless head,
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:
The godly men and the sun-hazed sleeper,
Time shall reap; but after the reaper
The world shall glean, to me, me the sleeper.

The dreams persists; it is more real than even bread which has substance and use. The painted canvas is durable and substantial; it has for its production and transport to market a whole array of machines and factories. But the picture which no factory can produce is a dream, *maya*. and yet it, not the canvas, has the meaning of ultimate reality.

A poet describes Autumn:

I saw old Autumn in the misty morn
Stand shadowless like Silence, listening
To silence, for no lonely bird would sing
Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn.

Of April another poet sings:

April, April,
Laugh shy girlish laughter;
Then the moment after
Weep thy girlish tears!
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears.

April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter.
But the moment after
Weep thy golden tears!

This Autumn, this April, - are they nothing but phantasy?

Let us suppose that the Man from the Moon comes to the earth and listens to some music in a gramophone. He seeks for the origin of the delight produced in his mind. The facts before him are a cabinet made of wood and a revolving disc producing sound; but the one thing which is neither seen nor call be explained is the truth of the music, which his personality must immediately acknowledge as a personal message. It is neither in the wood, nor in the disc, nor in tile sound of the notes. If the Man from the Moon be a poet, as can reasonably be supposed, he will write about a fairy imprisoned in that box, who sits spinning fabrics of songs expressing her cry for a far-away magic casement opening oil the foam of some perilous sea, in a fairyland. it will slot be literally, but essentially true. The facts of tile gramophone slake us aware of the laws of sound, but tile music gives its personal companionship. The bare facts about April are alternate sunshine and showers; but the subtle blending of shadows arid lights, of murmurs and movements, in April, gives its not mere shocks of sensation, but unity of Joy as does music. Therefore when a poet sees the vision of a girl! in April, even a downright materialist is in sympathy with him. But we know that the same individual would be menacingly angry if the law of heredity or a geometrical problem were described as a girl or a rose - or even as a. cat or a camel. For these intellectual abstractions have no magical touch for our lute-strings of imagination. They are no dreams, as are tile harmony of bird-songs, rainwashed leaving glistening in tile sun, and pale clouds floating in the blue.

The ultimate truth of our personality is that we are no mere biologists or geometr-cians; 'we are the dreamers of dreams, we are the musicmakers.' This dreaming or music-making is not a function of the lotuseaters, it is the creativc impulse which snakes songs not only with words aced tunes, lines and colours, but with stories and metals, with ideas and men:

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion all empire's glory.

I have been told by a scholar friend of mine that by constant practice in logic he has weakened his natural instinct of faith. The reason is, faith is the spectator in us which finds the meaning of the drama from the unity of tile performance; but logic lures us into the greenroom where there is stage craft but no drama at all; and then this logic nods its headand wearily talks about disillusionment, But the greenroom, dealing with its fragments, looks foolish when questioned, or wears the sneering smile of Mephistopheles; for its does not have the secret of unity, which is somewhere else. It is for faith to answer, 'Unity comes to its from the One, and the one in ourselves opens the door- and receives it ;with joy.' The function of poetry and the arts is to remind its that the greenroom is the grayest of illusions, and the reality is the drama. presented before its, all its paint and tinsel, masks and pageantry, made one in art. The ropes and wheels perish, the stage is changed; but the dream which is drama remains true, for there remains the eternal Dreamer.

III

Poetry and the arts cherish in them the profound faith of man in the unity of his being with all existence, the final truth of which is the truth of personality. It is a religion directly apprehended, and not a system of metaphysics to be analysed and argued. We know in our personal experience what our creations are and we instinctively know through it what

creation around us means.

When Keats said in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn":

Thou, silent form dost tease us out of thought,

As doth eternity, ...

he felt the ineffable which is in all forms of perfection, the mystery of the One, which takes us beyond all thought into the immediate touch of Infinite. This is the mystery which is for a poet to realise and to reveal. It comes out in Keats' poems with struggling gleams through coniciousness of suffering and despair:

Spite off, despondence, of the inhuman dearth Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darken'd ways Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, Some shape of beauty moves away the pall From our dark spirits.

In this there is a suggestion that truth reveals itself in beauty. For if beauty were mere accident, a rent in the eternal fabric of things, then it would hurt, would be defeated by the antagonism of facts. Beauty is no phantasy, it has the everlasting meaning of reality. The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mere mist, and when through the mist beauty breaks out in momentary gleams, we realize that Peace is true and not conflict, Love is trite and not hatred; and Truth is the One, not the disjointed multitude. We realize that Creation is the perpetual harmony between the infinite ideal of perfection and the eternal continuity of its realization; that so long as there is no absolute separation between the positive ideal acid the material obstacle to its attainment, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss. This is the poet's religion.

Those who are habituated to the rigid framework of sectarian creeds will find such a religion as this too indefinite and elastic. No doubt it is so, but only because its ambition is not to shackle the Infinite and tame it for domestic use; but rather to help our consciousness to emancipate itself from materialism. It is as indefinite as the morning, and yet as luminous; it calls our thoughts, feelings, and actions into freedom, and feeds them with light. In the poet's religion we find no doctrine or injunction, but rather the attitude of our entire being towards a truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation.

In dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere round the earth where lights and shadows play hide-and-seek, and the wind like a shepherd boy plays upon its reeds among flocks of clouds. It never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere to any solid conclusion; yet it reveals endless spheres of light, because it has no walls round, itself. It acknowledges the facts of evil; it openly admits 'the weariness, the fever and the fret' in the world 'where men sit and hear each other groan'; yet it remembers that in spite of all there is the song of the nightingale, and 'haply the Queen Moon is on her throne; and there is:

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine,

fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;

And mid-day's eldest child,

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

But all this has not the definiteness of an answer; it has only the music that teases its out of thought as it fills our being.

Let me read a translation from an Eastern poet to show how this idea comes out in a poem in Bengali:

In the morning I awoke at the flutter of thy boat-sails,

Lady of my Voyage, and I left. the shore to follow the beckoning waves.

I asked thee, Does the dream-harvest ripen in the island beyond the blue?'

The silence of thy smile fell on my question like the silence of sunlight on waves.

The day passed on through storm and through calm,

The perplexed winds changed their course, time after time, and the sea moaned.

I asked thee, 'Does thy sleep-tower stand somewhere beyond the dying embers of the day's funeral pyre?'

No answer came from thee, only thine eyes smiled like the edge of a sunset cloud.

It is night. They figure grows dim in the dark.

Thy wind-blown hair flits on my cheek and thrills my sadness with its scent.

My hands grope to touch the here of thy robe, and I ask thee – 'Is there thy garden of death beyond the stars, Lady of my Voyage, where thy silence blossoms into songs?'

Thy smile shines in the heart of the hush like the star-mist of midnight.

IV

In Shelley we clearly see the growth of his religion through periods of vagueness and doubt, struggle and searching. But he did at length come to a positive utterance of his faith, though he died young. Its final expression is fit his 'Hymn to in Intellectual Beauty. By the title of the poem the poet evidently means a beauty that is not merely a passive quality of particular things, but a spirit that manifests itself through the apparent antagonism of the unintellectual life. This hymn rang out of his heart when he came to the end of his pilgrimage and stood face to face with the Divinity, glimpses of which had already filled his Soul with restlessness. All his experiences of beauty had ever teased him with the question as to what

was its truth. Somewhere lie sings of a nosegay which lie makes of violets, daisies, tender bluebells and

That tall flower that wets
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth,
Its mother's face with "leaven-collected tears.

He ends by saying:

And then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present if'! – Oh! To whom?

This question, even though not answered, carries a significance. A creation of beauty suggests a fulfillment, which is the fulfillment of love. We have heard some poets scoff at it in bitterness and despair; but it is like a sick child beating its own mother - it is a sickness of faith, which hurts truth, but proves it by its very pain and anger. And the faith itself is this, that beauty is the self-offering of the One of the other One.

In the first part of his 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' Shelley dwells on the inconstancy and evanescence of the manifestation of beauty, which imparts to it an appearance of frailty and unreality:

Like hues and harmonies of evening,
Like clouds in starling widely spread.
Like memory of music fled.

This lie says, rouses in our mind the question:

Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth Such gloom,
why man has such a scope
for love and hate, despondency and hope?

The poet's own answer to this question is:

Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keepwith thy glorious train firm state within leis heart.

This very elusiveness of beauty suggests the vision of immortality and of omnipotence; and stimulates the effort in man to realize it in some idea of permanence. The highest reality has actively to be achieved. The gain of truth is not in the end; it reveals itself through the endless length of achievement. But what is there to guide us its our voyage of realization'? Men have ever been struggling for direction:

Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost and Heaven
Remain the records of their vain edeavour,
Frail spells, - whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance and mutability.

The prevalent rites and practices of piety, according to this poet, are like magic spells - they only prove men's desperate endeavour and not their success. He knows that the end we seek has its own direct calls to us, its own light to guide us to itself. And truth's call is the call of beauty. of this lie says:

The light alone, - like mist o'er mountain driven,
Or music by the night wind sent,
Thro' strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

About this revelation of truth which calls us on, and yet which is everywhere, a village singer of Bengal sings:

My master's flute sounds in everything,
drawing me out of my house of everywhere.

While I listen to it I know that every step I take
is in my master's house.

For he is the sea, he is the river that leads to the sea,
and he is the landing place.

Religion, in Shelley, grew with his life; it was not given to him in fixed and ready-made doctrines; he rebelled against them. He had the creative mind which could only approach Truth through its joy in creative effort. For true creation is realization of truth through the translation of it into our own symbols.

V

For man, the best opportunity for such a realization has been in men's Society. It is a collective creation of his, through which his social being tries to find itself in its truth and beauty. Had that Society merely manifested its usefulness, it would be inarticulate like a dark star. But, unless it degenerates, it ever suggests in its concerted movements a living truth as its soul, which has personality. In this large life of social communion man feels the mystery of Unity, as he does in music. From the sense of that Unity, men came to the sense of their God. And therefore every religion began with its tribal God.

The one question before all others that has to be answered by our civilizations is not what they have and in what quantity, but what they express and how. In a society, the production and circulation of materials, the amassing and spending of money, may go on, as in the interminable prolonging of a straight line, if its people forget to follow some spiritual design of life which curbs them and transforms them into an organic whole. For growth is not that enlargement which is merely adding to the dimensions of incompleteness. Growth is the movement of a whole towards a yet fuller wholeness. Living things start with this wholeness from the beginning of their career. A child has its own perfection as a child; it would be ugly if it appeared as an unfinished man. Life is a continual process of synthesis, and not of additions. Our activities of production and enjoyment of wealth attain that spirit of wholeness when they are blended with a creative ideal. Otherwise they have the insane aspect of the eternally unfinished; they become like locomotive engines which have railway lines but no stations; which rush oil towards a collision

of uncontrolled forces or to a sudden breakdown of tile overstrained machinery.

Through creation man expresses his truth; through that expression he gains back his truth in its fullness. Human society is for the best expression of man, and that expression, according to its perfection, leads him to the full realization of the divine in humanity. When that expression is obscure, then his faith in the Infinite that is within him becomes weak; then his aspiration cannot go beyond the idea of success. His faith in the Infinite is creative; his desire for success is constructive; one is his home., and the other is his office. With the overwhelming growth of necessity, civilization becomes a gigantic office to which the home is a mere appendix. The predominance of the pursuit of success gives to society the character of what we call *Shudra* in India. In fighting a battle, the *Kshatriya*, the noble knight,, followed his honour for his ideal, which was greater than victory itself: but the mercenary *Shudra* has success for his object. The name *Shudra* symbolizes a roar, who has no margin round him beyond his bare utility. The word denotes a classification which includes all naked machines that have lost their completeness of humanity, be their work manual or intellectual. They are like walking stomachs of brains, and we feel, in pity, urged to call on God and cry, 'Cover them up for mercys' sake with some veil of beauty and life!'

When Shelley in his view of the world realized the Spirit of Beauty, which is the vision of the Infinite, he thus uttered his faith:

Never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery;
That thou, - O awful Loveliness, -
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

This was his faith in the Infinite. It led his aspiration towards the region of freedom and perfection which was beyond the immediate and above the successful. This faith in God, this faith in the reality of the ideal of perfection, has built up all that is great in the human world. To keep indefinitely walking on, along a zigzag course of change, is negative and barren. A mere procession of notes does not make music; it is only when we have in the heart of the march of sounds some musical idea that it creates song. Our faith, in the infinite reality of Perfection is that musical idea, and there is that one great creative force in our civilization. When it wakens not, then our faith in money, in material power, takes its place; it fights and destroys, and in brilliant fireworks of star-mimicry suddenly exhausts itself and dies in ashes and smoke.

VI

Men of great faith lave always called its to wake up to great expectations, and the prudent have always laughed at them and said that these did not belong to reality. But the poet in man knows that reality is a creation, and human reality has to be called forth from its obscure depth by man's faith which is creative. There was a day when the human reality was the brutal reality. That was the only capital we had with which to begin our career. But age after age there has come to us the call of faith, which said against all the evidence of fact: 'You are more than you appear to be, more than your circumstances seem to warrant. You are to attain the impossible, you are immortal.' The unbelievers had laughed and tried to kill the faith. But faith grew stronger with the strength of martyrdom and at her bidding higher realities have been created over the strata of the lower. Has not a new age come to-day, borne by thunder-clouds, ushered in by a universal agony of suffering[7] Are we not waiting to-day for a great call of faith, which will say to us: 'Come out of your present liinitations. You are to attain the impossible, you are immortal'? The nations who are not prepared to accept it, who have all their trust in their present machines of system, and have no thought or space to spare to welcome the sudden guest who comes as the messenger of emancipation, are bound to court defeat whatever may be their present wealth and power.

This great world, where it is a creation, an expression of the infinite - where its morning sings of joy to the newly awakened life, and its evening stars sing to the traveler, weary and worn, of the triumph of life in a new birth across death, - has its call for us. The call has ever roused the creator in man, and urged him to reveal the truth, to reveal the Infinite in himself. It is ever claiming from us, in our own creations, cooperation with God, reminding us of our divine nature, which finds itself in freedom of spirit. Our society exists to remind us, through its various voices, that the ultimate truth in man is not in his intellect or his possessions; it is in his illumination of mind, in his extension of sympathy across all barriers of caste and colour; in his recognition of the world, not merely as a storehouse of power, but as a habitation of man's spirit, with its eternal music of beauty and its inner light of the divine presence.

The Creative Ideal

IN an old Sanskrit book there is a verse which describes the essential elements of a picture. The first in order is *Viupa-bhedah* –'separateness of forms.' Forms are many, forms are different, each of them having its limits. But if this were absolute, if all forms remained obstinately separate, then there would be a fearful loneliness of multitude. But the varied forms, in their very separateness, must carry something which indicates the paradox of their ultimate unity, otherwise there would be no creation.

So in the same verse, after the enumeration of separateness comes that of : *Pramanani* -proportions. Proportions indicate relationship, the principle of mutual accommodation. A leg dismembered from the body has the fullest licence to make a caricature of itself. But, as a member of the body, it has its responsibility to the living unity which rules the body; it must behave properly, it must keep its proportion. If, by some monstrous chance of physiological

profiteering, it could outgrow by yards its fellowstalker, then we know what a picture it would offer to the spectator and what embarrassment to the body itself. Any attempt to overcome the law of proportion altogether and to assert absolute separateness is rebellion; it means either running the gauntlet of the rest, or retraining segregated.

The same Sanskrit word *Pramanani,* which in a book of aesthetics means proportions, in a book of logic means the proofs by which the truth of a proposition is ascertained. All proofs of truth are credentials of relationship. Individual facts lave to produce such passports to show that they are not expatriated, that they are not a break in the unity of the whole. The logical relationship present in an intellectual proposition, and the aesthetic relationship indicated in the proportions of a work of art, both agree in one thing. They affirm that truth consists, not in facts, but in harmony of facts. Of this fundamental note of reality it is that the poet has said, 'beauty is truth, truth beauty.'

Proportions, which prove relativity, form the outward language of creative ideals. A crowd of men is desultory, but in a march of soldiers every man keeps his proportion of time and space and relative movement, which makes him one with the whole vast army. But this is not all. The creation of an army has, for its inner principle, one single ideas of the General. According to the nature of that ruling idea, a production is either a work of art or a mere construction. All the materials and regulations of a joint- stock company have the unity of an inner motive. But the expression of this unity itself is not the end; it ever indicates an ulterior purpose. On the other hands, the revelation of a work of art is a fulfillment in itself.

The consciousness of personality, which is the consciousness of unity in ourselves, becomes prominently distinct when coloured by joy or sorrow, or some other emotion. It is like tile sky: ,which is visible because it is blue, and which takes different aspect with the change of colours. In the creation of art, therefore, the energy of an emotional ideal is necessary; as its unity is not like that of a crystal, passive and inert, but actively expressive. Take, for example, the following verse:

Oh, fly not Pleasure, pleasant-hearted Pleasure,
Fold me thy wings, I prithee, yet and stay.
For my heart no measure
Knows, nor other treasure
To buy a garl and for my love to-day.
And thou too, Sorrow, tender-hearted Sorrow,
Thou grey-eyed mourner, fly not yet away.
For I fain would borrow
Thy sad weeds to-morrow,
To make a mourning for love's yesterday.

The words in this quotation, merely showing the metre, would have no appeal to us; with all its perfection and its proportion, rhyme and cadence, it would only be a construction. But when it is the outer body of an inner idea it assumes a personality. The idea flows through the rhythm, permeates the words and throbs in their rise .and fall. On the other hand, the mere idea of the above-quoted poem, stated in unrhythmic prose, would represent only a fact, inertly static, which would not bear repetition. But the emotional idea, incarnated in a rhythmic form, acquires the dynamic quality needed for those things which take part in the world's eternal pageantry.

Take the following doggere!:

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November.

The metre is there, and it simulates the movement of life. But it finds no synchronous response in the metre of our heart-beats; it has not in its centre the living idea which creates for itself an indivisible unity. It is like a bag which is convenient, and not like a body which is inevitable.

This truth, implicit in our own works of art, gives its the clue to the mystey of creation. We find that the endless rhythms of the world are not merely constructive; they strike our own heart-strings and produce music.

Therefore it is we feel that this world is a creation; that in its centre there is a living idea which reveals itself in an eternal symphony, played on innumerable instruments, all keeping perfect time. We know that this great world-verse, that runs from sky to sky, is not made for the mere enumeration of facts - it is not "Thirty days hath September" - it has its direct revelation in our delight. That delight gives its the key to the truth of existence; it is personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations. The solicitor does not sing to his client, but the bridegroom sings to his bride. And when our soul is stirred by the song, we know it claims no fees from us; but it brings the tribute of love and a call from the bridegroom.

It may be said that in pictorial and other arts there are some designs that are purely decorative and apparently have no living and inner ideal to express. But this cannot be true. These decorations carry the emotional motive of the artist, which says: 'I find joy in my creation; it is good.' All the language of.joy is beauty. It is necessary to note, however, that joy is not pleasure, and beauty not mere prettiness. Joy is the outcome of detachment from self and lives in freedom of spirit. Beauty is that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without any other allurements but its own ultimate value. When in some pure moments of ecstasy we realize this in the world around its, we see the world, not as merely existing, but as decorated in its form, sounds, colours and lines; we feel in our hearts that thee is One who through all things proclaims: 'I have joy in my creation.'

That is why the Sanskrit verse has given us for the essential elements of a picture, not only the manifoldness of forms and the unity of their proportions, but also *bhavah*, the emotional idea.

It is needless to say that upon a mere expression of

emotion - even the best expression of it - no criterion of art can rest. The following poem is described by the poet as 'An earnest Suit to his unkind Mistress':

And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay, for shame!
To save thee from the blame
Of all my grief and grame.
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay! Say nay!

I am sure the poet would not be offended if I expressed my doubts about the earnestness of his appeal, or the truth of his avowed necessity. He is responsible for the lyric and not for the sentiment, which is mere material. The fire assumes different colours according to the fuel used; but we do not discuss the fuel, only the flames. A lyric is indefinably more than tile sentiment expressed in it, as a rose is more that, its substance. Let us take a poem in which the earnestness of sentiment is truer and deeper than the one I have quoted above:

The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with the sense of the triumphing night,
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.
So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet West,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

The sentiment expressed in this poem is a subject for a psychologist. But for a poem the subject is completely merged in its poetry, like carbon in a living plant which the lover of plants ignores, leaving it for a charcoal-burner to seek.

This is why, when some storm of feeling sweeps across the country, art is under a disadvantage. In such an atmosphere the boisterous passion breaks through the cordon of harmony and thrusts itself forward as the subject, .which with its bulk and pressure dethrones the unity of creation. For a similar reason most of the hymns used in churches suffer from lack of poetry. For in them the deliberate subject, assuming the first importance, benumbs or kills the poem. Most patriotic poems have the same deficiency. They are like hill streams born of sudden showers, which are more proud of their rocky beds than of their water currents; in them the athletic and arrogant subject takes it for granted that the poem is there to give it occasion to display its powers. The subject is the material wealth for the sake of which poetry should never be. tempted to barter her soul, even though the temptation should come in the name and shape of public good or Some usefulness. Between the artist and his art must be that perfect detachment which is the pure medium of love. He must never make use of this love except for its own perfect expression.

In everyday life our personality moves in a narrow circle of immediate self-interest. And therefore our feelings any? events, within that short range, become prominent Subjects for ourselves. In their vehement selfassertion they ignore their unity with the All. They rise up like obstructions and obscure their own background. But art gives our personality the disinterested freedom of the eternal, there to find it in its true perspective. To see our own home in flames is not to see fire in its verity. But the fire in the stars is the fire in the heart of the Infinite; there, it is the script of creation.

Matthew Arnold, in his poem addressed to a nightingale, sings: Hark! Ah, the nightingale-

The tawny-throated!
Hark, froth that moonlit cedar what a burst!

What triumphs hark! - what pain!

But pain, when met within the boundaries of limited reality, repels and hurts; it is discordant with the narrow scope of life. But the pain of some great martyrdom has the detachment of eternity. It appears in all its majesty, harmonious in the context of everlasting life; like the thunderflash in the stormy sky, not on the laboratory wire. Pain on that scale has its harmony in great love; for by hurting love it reveals the infinity of love in all its truth and beauty. On the other hands, the pain involved in business insolvency is discordant; it kills and consumes till nothing remains but ashes.

The poet sings again:

How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!

Eternal Passion!

Eternal Pain!

And the truth of pain in eternity has been sung by those Vedic poets who had said, 'From joy has come forth. all creation.' They say:

Sa. tapas tapatva sarvam asrajata yadidam kincha.

(God from the heat of his pain created all that there is.)

The sacrifice, which is in the heart of creation, is both joy and pain at the same moment Of this sings a village mystic in Bengal:

My eyes drown in the darkness of joy,
My heart, like a lotus, closes its petals is the rapture of the *dark* night.

That song speaks of a Joy which is deep like the blue sea, endless like the blue sky; which has the magnificence of the night, and in its limitless darkness enfolds the radiant world,. in the awfulness of peace; it is the unfathomed joy in which all sufferings are made one.

A poet of mediaeval India tells us about his source of inspiration in a poem containing a question and an answer:

Where were your songs, my bird, when you spent ;our

nights in the nest?

Was not all your pleasure stored therein,?

What makes you lose your heart to the sky, the sky that is limitless? The bird answers:

I have my pleasure while I rested within bounds.

When I soared into the limitless; I found my songs!

To detach the individual idea from its confinement of everyday facts and to give its soaring wings the freedom of the universal: this is the function of poetry. The ambition of *Macbeth*, the jealousy of Othello, would be at best sensational in police court proceedings; but in Shakespeare's dramas they are carried among the flaming constellations where creation throbs with Eternal passion, Eternal Pain.

The Religion of the Forest.

I

WE stand before this great world. The truth of our life depends upon our attitude of mind towards it - an attitude which is formed by our habit of dealing with it according to the special circumstance of our surroundings and our temperaments. It guides our attempts to establish relations with the universe either by conquest or by union, either through the cultivation of power or through that of sympathy. And thus, in our realization of the truth of existence, we put our emphasis either upon the principle of dualism or upon the principle of unity.

The Indian sages have held in the Upanishads that the emancipation of our soul lies in its realizing the ultimate truth of unity. They said:

Ishavasyam idam sarvam yat kinch jagatyam jagat.

Yena tyaktena bhujitha ma gradha kasyasvit dhanam.

(Know all that moves in this moving world as enveloped by God; and find enjoyment through renunciation, not through greed of possession.)

The meaning of this is, that, when we know the multiplicity of things as the final truth, we try to augment ourselves by the external possession of them; but, when we know the Infinite Soul as the final truth, then through our union with it we realize the joy of our soul. Therefore it has been said of those who have attained their fulfillment, - '*sarvam eva vishanti*'(they enter into all things). Their perfect relation with this world is the relation of union.

This ideal of perfection preached by the forest-dwellers of ancient India runs through the heart of our classical literature and still dominates our mind. The legends related in our epics cluster under the forest shade bearing all through their narrative the message of the forest -dwellers. Our two greatest classical drama find their background in scenes of the forest hermitage; which are permeated by the association of these sages.

The history of the Northmen of Europe is resonant with the music of the sea. That sea is not merely topographical in its significance, but represents certain ideals of life which still guide the history and inspire the creations of that race. In the sea, nature presented herself to those men in her aspect of a danger, a barrier which seemed to be at constant war with the land and its children, The sea was the challenge of untamed nature to the indomitable human soul. And man did not flinch; he fought and won, and the spirit of fight continued in him. This fight lie still maintains; it is the fight against disease and poverty, tyranny of matter and of man.

This refers to a people who live by the sea, and ride on it as on a wild, champing horse, catching it by its mane and making it render service from shore to shore. They find delight

in turning by force the antagonism of circumstances into obedience. Truth appears to them in her aspect of dualism, the perpetual conflict of good and evil, which has no reconciliation, which call only end it; victory or defeat.

But in the level tracts of Northern India men found no barrier between, their lives and the grand life that permeates the universe. The forest entered into a close living relationship with their work and leisure, with their daily necessities and contemplations They could not think of other surroundings as separate or inimical. So the view of the truth, which these men found, did not make manifest the difference, but rather the unity of all things. They uttered their in these words: *Yadidam -hrelta suvam prana ejati nihsratam* (All that is vibrates with life, having come out from life). When we know this world as alien to us, then its mechanical aspect takes prominence in our mind; and then we set up our machines and our methods to deal with it and make as much profit as our knowledge of its mechanism allows *us* to do. This view of things does not play us false, for the machine has its place in this world. And not only this material universe, but human beings also, may be used as machines and made to yield powerful results. This aspect of truth cannot be ignored; it has to be known and mastered. Europe has done so and leas reaped a rich harvest.

The view of this world which India has taken is summed up in one compound Sanskrit Word, *Sacchidananda.* The meaning is that Reality, which is essentially one, has three phases. The first is sat; it is the simple fact that things are, the fact which relates us to all things through the relationship of common existence. The second is *chit*; it is the fact that we know, which relates us to all things through the relationship of knowledge. The third is *ananda: it is the* fact that we enjoy, which unites *us* with all things through the relationship of love.

According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of thin- gs that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect But it is perfect when our consiciousness realises all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through. expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating *it,* but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union.

II

When Vikramaditya became king, Ujjayini a great capital, and Kalidasa its poet, the age of India's forest retreats had passed. Then we had taken our stand in the midst of the great concourse of humanity. The Chinese and the Hun, the Scythian and the Persian, the Greek and the Roman, had crowded round us. But, ever, in that age of pomp and prosperity, the love and reverence with which its poet sang about the hermitage shows what was the dominant ideal that occupied the mind of India; what was the one current of memory that continually flowed through her life.

In Kalidasa's drama, *Shakuntala,* the hermitage, which dominates the play, overshadowing the king's palace, has the same idea running through it - the recognition of the kinship of man with conscious and unconscious creation alike.

A poet of a later age, while describing a hermitage in his *Kadambari,* ells us of the posture of salutation in the flowering lianas as they bow to he wind; of the sacrifice offered by the trees scattering their blossoms; of the grove resounding with the lessons chanted by the neophytes., and he verses repeated by the parrots, learnt by constantly hearing them; of the wild-fowl enjoying *vaishva-deva-bali-pinda* (the *food offered* to the livinity which is in all creatures); of the ducks coming up from the lake or their portion of the grass seed spread in the cottage yards to dry; and of the deer caressing with their tongues the young hermit boys. It is again the same story. The hermitage shines out, in all our ancient literature, is the place where the chasm between man and the rest of creation has been bridged.

In the Western dramas, human characters drown our attention in he vortex of their passions. Nature occasionally peeps out, but she is almost always a trespasser, who has to offer excuses, or bow apologetically and depart. But in all our dramas which still retain their fame, such as *Mrit-Shakatika*, Shakuntala, Uttara-Ramacharita, Nature stands on her own right, proving that she has her great function, to impart the peace of the eternal to human emotions.

The fury of passion in two of Shakespeare's youthful poems is exhibited in conspicuous isolation. It is snatched away, naked, from the context of the All; it has not the green earth or the blue sky around it; it is there ready to bring to our view the raging fever which is in man's desires, and not the balm of health and repose which encircles it in the universe.

Ritusamhara is clearly a work of Kalidasa's immaturity. The youthful love-song in it does not reach the sublime reticence which is in *Shakuntla* and *Kumara-Sambhava. But* the tune of the these voluptuous outbreaks is set to the varied harmony of Nature's symphony. The moonbeams of the summer evening, resonant with the flow of fountains, acknowledge it as a part of its own melody. In its rhythm sways the Kadamaba forest, glistening in the first cool rain of the season; and the south breezes, carrying the scent of the mango blossoms, temper it with their murmur.

In the third canto of *Kumara-Sambhava,* Madana, the God Eros, enters the forest sanctuary to set free a sudden flood of desire amid the serenity of the ascetics' meditation. But the boisterous outbreak of passion so caused was shown against a background of universal life. The divine love-thrills of Sati and Shiva found their response in the worldwide immensity of youth, in which animals and trees have their life-throbs.

Not only its third canto but the whole of the *Kumara-Sambhava* poem is painted upon a limitless canvas. It tells of

the eternal wedding of love, its wooing and sacrifice, and its fulfilment, for which the gods wait in suspense. Its inner idea is deep and of all time. It answers the one question that humanity asks through all its endeavours : 'How is the birth of the hero to be brought about, the brave one who can defy and vanquish the evil demon laying waste heaven's own kingdom?'

It becomes evident that such a problem had become acute in Kalidasa's time, when the old simplicity of Hindu life had broken up. The Hindu kings, forgetful of their duties, had become self-seeking epicureans, and India was being repeatedly devastated by the Scythians. What answer, then, does the poem give to the question it raises? Its message is that the cause of weakness lies in the inner life of the soul. It is in some break of harmony with the Good, some dissociation from the true. In the commencement of the poem we find that the God Shiva, the, Good, had remained for long lost in the self-centred solitude of his asceticism, detached from the world of reality. And then Paradise was lost. But *Kumara-Sambhava* is the poem of Paradise Regained. How was it regained? When Sati, the Spirit, through humiliation, suffering, and penance, won the Heart of Shiva, the Spirit of Goodness. And thus, from the union of the freedom of the real with the restraint of the Good, was born the heroism that released Paradise from the demon of Lawlessness.

Viewed from without, India, in the time of Kalidasa, appeared to have reached the zenith of civilization excelling as she did in luxury, literature and the arts. But from the poems of Kalidasa it is evident that this very magnificence of wealth and enjoyment worked against the ideal that sprang and flowed forth from the sacred solitude of the forest. These poems contain the voice of warnings against the gorgeous unreality of that age, which, like a Himalayan avalanche, was slowly gliding down to an abyss of catastrophe. And from his seat beside all the glories of Vikramaditya's throne the poet's heart yearns for the purity and simplicity of India's past age of spiritual striving. And it was this yearning which impelled him to go back to the annals of the ancient Kings of Raghu's line for the narrative poem, in which he traced the history of the rise and fall of the ideal that should guide the rulers of men.

King Dilipa, with Queen Sudakshina, has entered upon the life of the forest. The great monarch is busy tending the cattle of the hermitage. Thus the poem opens, amid scenes of simplicity and self-denial. But it ends in the palace of magnificence, in the extravagance of self-enjoyment. With a calm restraint of language the poet tells us of the kingly glory crowned with purity. He begins his poem as the day begins, hi the serenity of sunrise. But lavish are the colours in which he describes the end, as of the evening, eloquent for a time with the sumptuous splendour of sunset, but overtaken at last by the devouring darkness which sweeps away all its brilliance into night.

In this beginning and this ending of his poem, there lies hidden that, message of the forest which found its voice in the poet's words. There runs through the narrative the idea that the future glowed gloriously ahead only when there was in the atmosphere the calm of self-control, of purity and renunciation. When downfall had become imminent, the hungry fires of desire, aflaine at a hundred different points, dazzled the eyes of all beholders.

Kalidasa in almost all his works represented the unbounded impetuousness of kingly splendour on the one side and the serene strength of regulated desires on the other. Even in the minor drama of *Malavikagnimitra* we find the same thing in a different manner. It must never be thought that, in this play, the poet's deliberate object was to pander to his royal patron by inviting him to a literary orgy of lust and passion. The very introductory verse indicates the object towards :which this play is directed. The poet begins the drama with the prayer, *Sanmagalokayan vyaoanayatu sa nastamasi vritimishah (*Let God, to illumine for us the path of truth, sweep away our passions, bred of darkness). This is the God Shiva, in whose nature Parvati, the eternal Woman, is ever commingled in an ascetic purity of love. The unified being of Shiva and Parvati is the perfect symbol of the eternal in the wedded love of man and woman. When the poet opens his drama with an invocation of this Spirit of the Divine Union it is evident that it contains in it the message with which he greets his kingly audience. The whole drama goes to show the ugliness of the treachery and cruelty inherent in unchecked self-indulgence. In the play the conflict of ideals is between the King and the Queen, between Agnimitra and Dharini, and the significance of the contrast lies hidden in the very names of the hero and the heroine.. Though the name Agnimitra is historical, yet it symbolizes in the poet's wind the destructive force of uncontrolled desire -just as did the name Agnivarna in *Rahuvamsha*. Agnimitra, 'the friend of the fire,' the reckless person who in his love-making is playing with fire, not knowing that all the time it is scorching him black. And what a great name is Dharini, signifying the fortitude and forbearance that comes from majesty of soul: What an association it carries of the infinite- dignity of love, purified by a self-abnegation that rises far above all insult and baseness of betrayal!

In *Shankuntala* this conflict of ideals has been shown, all through the drama, by the contrast of the pompous heartlessness of the king's court and the natural purity of the forest hermitage. The drama opens with a hunting scene, where the king is in pursuit of an antelope. The cruelty of the chase appears like a menace symbolising the spirit of the king's life. clashing against the spirit of the forest retreat, which is sh*aranyam sarva-bhiltanam* (where all creatures find their protection of love). And the pleading of the forest-dwellers with the king to spare the life of the deer, helplessly innocent and beautiful, is the pleading that rises from the heart of the whole drama. 'Never, oh, never is the arrow meant to pierce the tender body of a deer; even as the fire is not for the burning of flowers.'

In the *Ramayana*, Rama and his companions, in their banishment, had to traverse forest after forest; they had to

live in leaf-thatched huts, to sleep on. the bare ground. But as their hearts felt their kinship with woodland, hill, and stream, they were not in exile amidst these. Poets, brought up in art atmosphere of different ideals, would have taken this opportunity of depicting in dismal colours the hardship of the forest-life in order to bring out the martyrdom of Ramachandra with all the emphasis of a strong contrast. But, in the *Ramayana,* we are led to realize the Greatness of the hero, not in a fierce struggle with Nature., but in sympathy with it Sita, the daughter-in-law of a great kingly house, goes along the forest paths. We read:

"She asks Rama about the flowering trees, and shrubs and creepers -which she has not seen before. At her request Lakshmana gathers and brings her plants of all kinds, exuberant with flowers, and it delights her heart to see the forest rivers, variegated with their streams and sandy banks, resounding with the call of heron and duck.

'When Rama first took his abode in the Chitrakuta peak, that delightful Chitrakuta, by the Malyavati river, with its easy slopes for landing, he forgot all the pain of leaving his home in the capital at the sight of those woodlands, alive with beast and bird.'

Having lived on that hill for long, Patna, who was giri-*vana-priya* (lover of the mountain and the forest). said one day to Situ:

'When I look upon the beauties of this hill, the loss of my kingdom troubles me no longer, nor does the separation front friends cause me any pang.'

Thus passed Ramachandra's exile, now in woodland, now in hermitage. The love which Rama and Sita bore to each other united them, not only to each other, but to the universe of life. That is why, when Sita was taken away, the loss seemed to be so great to the forest itself.

III

Strangely enough, in Shakespeare's dramas, like those of Kalidasa, we find a secret vein of complaint against the artificial life of the king's court - the life of ungrateful treachery and falsehood. And almost everywhere, in his dramas, foreign scenes have been introduced in connection with some working of the life of unscrupulous ambition. It is perfectly obvious in *Timon of Athens* - but there Nature offers no message or balm to the injured soul of man. In *Cymbelineline* the mountainous forest and the cave appear in their aspect of obstruction to life's opportunities. These only seem tolerable in comparison with the vicissitudes of fortune in the artificial court life. In As you *Like !t* the forest of Arden is didactic in its lessons. It does not bring peace, but preaches, when it says:

> Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court?

In the Tempest, through Prospero's treatment of Ariel and Caliban we realize man's struggle with Nature and his longing to sever connection with her. In *Macheth,* as a prelude to a bloody crime of treachery and treason, we are introduced to a scene of barren heath where the three witches appear as personifications of Nature's malignant forces; and in *King Lear* it is the fury of a father's love turned into curses by the ingratitude born of the unnatural life of the court that finds its symbol in the storm on the heath. The tragic intensity of Hamlet and Othello is unrelieved by any touch of Nature's eternity. Except in a passing glimpse of a moonlight night in the love scene in the *Merchant of Venice,* Nature has not been allowed in other dramas of this series, including Romeo *and Juliet* and Antony and Cleopatra, to contribute her own music to the music of man's love. In *The Winter's* Tale the cruelty of a king's suspicion stands bare in its relentlessness, and Nature cowers before it, offering no consolation.

I hope it is needless for me to say that these observations are not intended to minimize Shakespeare's great power as a dramatic poet, but to show in his works the gulf between Nature and human nature owing to the tradition of his race and time. It cannot be said that beauty of nature is ignored in his writings; only he fails to recognize in them the truth of the interpenetration of human life with the cosmic life of the world. We observe a completely different attitude of mind in the later English poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, which can be attributed in the main to the great mental change in Europe, at that particular period, through the influence of the newly discovered philosophy of India which stirred the soul of Germany and aroused the attention of other Western countries.

In Milton's Paradise Lost, the very subject - Man dwelling in the garden of Paradise - seems to afford a special opportunity for bringing out the true greatness of man's relationship with Nature. But though the poet has described to us the beauties of the garden, though he has shown to its the animals living there in amity and peace among themselves, there is no reality of kinship between them and mail. They were created for man's enjoyment; man was their lord and master. We find no trace of the love between the first man and woman gradually surpassing themselves and overflowing the rest of creation, such as we find in the love scene in *Kumara-Sambhava* and *Shakuntala*. In the seclusion of the bower, where the first man and woman rested in the garden of Paradise

> Bird, beast, insect or worm
>
> Dust enter none, such was their awe of man.

Not that India denied the superiority of man, but the test of that superiority lay, according to her, in the comprehensiveness of sympathy, not in the aloofness of absolute distinction.

IV

India holds sacred, and counts as places of pilgrimage,

all spots which display a special beauty or splendour of nature. These had no original attraction on account of any special fitness for cultivation or settlement Here man is free, not to look upon Nature as a source of supply of his necessities, but to realise his soul beyond himself. The Himalayas of India are sacred and the Vindhya Hills. Her majestic rivers are sacred. Lake Manasa and the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna are .sacred. India has saturated with her love and worship the great Nature with which her children are surrounded, whose light fills their eyes with gladness, and whose water cleanses them, whose food gives them life, and from whose majestic mystery comes forth the constant revelation of the infinite in music, scent, and colour, which brings its awakening to the soul of man. India gains the world through worship, through spiritual communion; and the idea of freedom to which she aspired was based upon the realisation of her spiritual unity.

When, in my recent voyage to Europe, our ship left Aden and sailed along the sea which lay between the two continents, we passed by the red and barren rocks of Arabia on our right side and the gleaming sands of Egypt on our left. They seemed to me like two giant brothers exchanging with each other burning glances of hatred, kept apart by the tearful entreaty of the sea from whose womb they had their birth.

There was an immense stretch of silence on the left shore as well as on the right, but the two shores spoke to me of the two different historical dramas enacted. The civilization which found its growth in Egypt was continued across long centuries, elaborately rich with sentiments and expressions of life, with pictures, sculptures, temples, and cermonials. This was a country whose guardian-spirit was a noble river, which spread the festivities of life on its banks across the heart of the land. There man never raised the barrier of alienation between himself and the rest of the world.

On the opposite shore of the Red Sea the civilization which grew up in the inhospitable soil of Arabia had a contrary character to that of Egypt. There man felt himself isolated in his hostile and bare surroundings. His idea of God became that of a jealous God. His mind naturally dwelt upon the principle of separateness. It roused in him the spirit of fight, and this spirit was a force that drove him far and wide. These two civilizations represented two fundamental divisions of human nature. The one contained in it the spirit of conquest and the other, the spirit of harmony. And both of these have their truth and purpose in human existence.

The characters of two eminent sages leave been described in our mythology. One was Vashistha and another Vishvamitra. Both of them were great, but they represented two different types of wisdom; and there was conflict between them. Vishvamitra sought to achieve power and was proud of it; Vashishtha was rudely smitten by that power. But his hurt and his loss could not touch the illumination of his soul; for he rose above them and could forgive. Ramachandra, the great hero of our epic, had his initiation to the spiritual life from Vashishtha, the life of inner peace and perfection. But he had his initiation to war from Vishvamitra, who called him to kill the demons and gave him weapons that were irresistible.

Those two sages symbolize in themselves the two guiding spirits of civilization. Can it be true that they shall never be reconciled? If so, can ever the age of peace and co-operation dawn upon the human world[7] Creation is the harmony of contrary forces - the forces of attraction and repulsion. When they join hands, all the fire and fight are changed into the smile of flowers and the songs of birds. When there is only one of them triumphant and the other defeated, then either there is the death of cold rigidity or that of suicidal explosion.

Humanity, for ages, has been busy with the one great creation of spiritual life. Its best wisdom, its discipline, its literature and art, all the teaching and self-sacrifice of its noblest teachers, have been for this. Belt the harmony of contrary forces, which give their rhythm to all creation, has not yet been perfected by man In his civilization, and the Creator in him is baffled over and over again. He comes back to his work, however, and makes himself busy building his world in the midst of desolation and ruins. His history is the history of his aspiration interrupted and renewed: And one truth of which he must be reminded. therefore, is that the power which accomplishes the miracle of creation, by bringing conflicting forces into the harmony of the One, is no passion, but a love which accepts the bonds of self-control from the joy of its owns immensity -a love. whole sacrifice is the manifestation of its endless wealth within itself.

An Indian Folk Religion

1

IN historical time the Buddha comes first of those who - declared salvation to all men, without distinction, as by right man's own. What was the special force which startled men's minds and, almost within the master's lifetime, spread his teachings over India? It was the unique significance of the event, when a man came to men and said to them, I am here to emancipate you from the miseries of the thraldom of self.' This wisdom came, neither in texts of Scripture, nor in symbols of deities, nor in religious practices sanctified by ages, but through the voice of a living man and the love that flowed from a human heart.

And I believe this was the first occasion in the history of the world when the idea of the Avatar found its place in religion. Western scholars are never tired of insisting that Buddhism is of the nature of a moral code, coldly leading to the path of extinction. They forget that it was held to be a religion that roused in its devotees an inextinguishable fire of enthusiasm and carried them to lifelong exile across the mountain and desert barriers. To say that a philosophy of suicide can keep kindled in Human hearts for centuries such fervour of self-sacrifice is to go against all the laws of same psychology. The religions enthusiasm which cannot be bound within any daily ritual, but overflows into adventures of love and beneficence, must have in its center that element of personality which rouses the whole soul. In answer, it may possibly be said that this was due to the personality of Buddha himself. But that also is not quite true. The personality which stirs the human heart to. its- immense depths, leading it to impossible deeds of heroism, must in the process itself reveal to men the infinite which is in all. humanity. And that is what happened in Buddhism, making it a religion in the complete sense of the word.

Like the religion of the Upanishads, Buddhism also generated two divergent currents; the one impersonal, preaching the abnegation of self through discipline, and the other personal, preaching the cultivation of sympathy for all creatures, and devotion to the infinite truth of love; the other, which is called the Mahayana, had its origin in the positive element contained in Buddha's teachings, which is immeasurable love. It could never, by any logic, find its reality iii the emptiness of the truthless abyss. And the object of Buddha's meditation and his teachings was to free humanity from sufferings. But what was the path that he revealed to us? Was it some negative way of evading pain and seeking security against it? On the contrary, his path was the path of sacrifice - the utmost sacrifice of love. The meaning of such sacrifice is to reach some ultimate truth, some positive ideal, which in its greatness call accept suffering and transmute it into the profound peace of self-renunciation. True emancipation from suffering, which is the inalienable condition of the limited life of the self, can never be attained by fleeing from it, but rather by changing its value in the realm of truth - the truth of the higher life of love.

We have learnt that, by calculations made in accordance with the law of gravitation, some planets were discovered exactly in the place where they should be. Such a law of gravitation there is also in the moral world. And when we find men's minds disturbed, as they were by the preaching of the Buddha, we can be sure, even without any corroborative evidence, that there must have been some great luminous body of attraction, positive and powerful, and not a mere unfathomable vacancy. It is exactly this which we discover in the heart of the Mahayana system; and we have no hesitation in saying that the truth of Buddhism is there. The oil has to be burnt, not for the purpose of diminishing it, but for the purpose of giving light to the lamp. And when the Buddha said that the self must go, he said at the same moment that love must be realised. Thus originated the doctrine of the Dharma-kaya, the Infinite Wisdom and Love manifested in the Buddha. It was the first instance, as I have said, when men felt that the Universal and the Eternal Spirit was revealed in a human individual whom they had known and touched. The joy was too great for them, since the very idea itself came to them as a freedom - a freedom, from the sense of their measureless insignificance. It was the first time I repeat, when the individual, as a man, felt in himself the Infinite made concrete.

What was more, those men who felt the love welling forth from the heart of Buddhism, as one with the current of the Eternal Love itself, were struck with the idea that such an effluence could never have been due to a single cataclysm of history - unnatural and therefore untrue. They felt instead that it was in the eternal nature of truth, that the event must belong to a series of manifestations; there must have been numberless other revelations in the past and endless others to follow.

The idea grew and widened until men began to feel that this Infinite Being was already in every one of them, and that it rested with themselves to remove the sensual obstructions and reveal him in their own lives. In every individual there was, they realised, the potentiality of Buddha -that is to say, the Infinite made manifest.

We have to keep in mind the great fact that the preaching of the Buddha in India was not followed by stagnation of life - as would surely have happened if humanity was without any positive goal and his teaching was without any permanent value in itself. On the contrary, we find the arts and sciences springing up in its wake, institutions started for alleviating the misery of all creatures, human and non-human, and great centers of education founded. Some mighty power was suddenly roused from its obscurity, which worked for long centuries and changed the history of man in a large part of the world. And that power came into its full activity only by the individual being made conscious of his infinite worth. It was like the sudden discovery of a great mine of living wealth.

During the period of Buddhism the doctrine of deliverance flourished, which reached all mankind and released man's inner resources from neglect and self-insult. Even to-day we see in our own country human nature, from its despised corner of indignity, slowly and painfully finding its way to assert the inborn majesty of man. It is like the imprisoned tree finding a rift in the wall, and sending out its eager branches into freedom, to prove that darkness is not its birthright, that its love is for the sunshine. In the time of the Buddha the individual discovered his own immensity of worth, first by witnessing a man who united his heart in sympathy with all creatures, in all world, through the power of a love that knew no bounds; and then by learning that the same light of perfection lay confined within himself behind the clouds of selfish desire, and that the *Bodhi-hridaya* –'the heart of the Eternal Enlightenment' - every moment claimed its unveiling in his own heart Nagarjuna speaks of this *Bodhi-hridaya* (another of whose names is *Bodhi-Citta)* as follows:

One who understands the nature of the *Bodhi-hridaya,* sees everything with a loving heart; for love is the essence of *Bodhi-hriyadaya*[1].

My object in writing this paper is to show, by the further help of illustration from a popular religious sect of Bengal, that the religious instinct of man urges him towards a truth, by which he can transcend the finite nature of the individual self. Man would never feel the indignity of his limitations if these were inevitable. Within him he has glimpses of the infinite, which give him assurance that this truth is not in his limitations, but that this truth can be attained by love. For love is the positive quality of the infinite, and love's sacrifice accordingly does not lead to emptiness, but to fulfilment, to *Bodbi-hridaya,* 'the heart of enlightenment.'

The members of the religious sect I have mentioned call themselves 'Baul.' They live outside social recognition, and their very obscurity helps them in their seeking, from a direct source, the enlightenment which the soul longs for, the eternal light of love.

It would be absurd to say that there is little difference between Buddhism and the religion of these simple people, who have no system of metaphysics to support their faith. But my- object in bringing close together these two religions which seen to belong to opposite poles, is to point out the fundamental unity in them. Both of them believe in a fulfilment which reached by love's emancipating us front the dominance of self. In both these religions we find man's yearning to attain the infinite worth of his individuality, not through any conventional valuation of society, but through his perfect relationship with Truth. They agree in holding that the realization of our ultimate object is waiting for us in ourselves. The Baul likens this fulfilment to the blossoming of a bud, and sings:

Make way, O bud, make way,
Burst open thy heart and make way.
The opening spirit has overtaken tree,
Canst thou remain a bud any longer'

1. Outlines *of Mahayana* Buddhism by D.T. Suzaki.

II

One day in a small village in Bengal, an ascetic woman from the neighbourhood came to see me. She had the name 'Sarva-khepi' given to her by the village people, the meaning of which is 'the woman who is mad about all things.' She fixed her star-like eyes upon my face and startled rare with the question, 'When are you coming to meet nee underneath the trees?' Evidently .she pitied me who lived (according, to her) perisoned behind walls, banished away front the great meetingplace of the All, where she had her dwelling. Just at that moment my gardener came with his basket, and when the woman understood that the flowers in the vase on my table were going to be thrown away, to make place for the fresh ones, she looked pained and said to me, You are always engaged reading and writing; you do not see.' Then she took the discarded flowers in her palms, kissed them and touched there with her forehead, and reverently murmured to herself, Beloved of my heart.' I felt that this woman, in her direct vision of the infinite personality in the heart of all things, truly represented the spirit of India.

In the same village I came into touch with some Basil singers. I had known them by their names, occasionally seen them singing and begging in the street. and so passed them by, vaguely classifying them in my mind under the general name of *Vairagis*, or ascetics.

The time came when I had occasion to meet with some members of the same body and talk to them about spiritual matters. The first Baul song, which I chanced to hear with any attention, profoundly stirred my mind. Its words are so simple that it makes me hesitate to render them in a foreign tongue, and set them forward for critical observation. Besides,

the best part of a song is missed when the tune is absent; for thereby its movement and its colour are lost, and it becomes like a butterfly whose wings have been plucked.

The first lire play be translated thus: 'Where shall I meet him, the Man of my Heart?'This phrase, 'the Man of my Heart,' is not peculiar to this song, but is usual with the Baul sect. It means that, for mè, the supreme truth of all existence is in the revelation of the infinite in my oven humanity.

'The Man of my Heart,' to the Baul, is like a divine instrument perfectly tuned. He gives expression to infinite truth in the music of life. And the longing for the truth which is in us, which we have not yet realised, breaks out in the following Baul song:

Where shall I meet him, the Man of my Heart?
He is lost to me and I seek him wandering front land to land.
I am listless for that moonrise of beauty, which is to light my life,
which 1 long to see in the fullness of vision, in gladness of heart.

The name of the poet who wrote this song was Gagan.

He was almost illiterate; and the ideas he received from his Baul teacher found no distraction front the self-consciousness of the modern age. He was a village postman, earning about ten shillings a month, and he died before he had completed his teens. The sentiment, to which he gave such intensity of expression, is common to most of the songs of his sect. And it is a sect, almost exclusivey confined to that lower floor of society, where the light of modern education hardly finds an entrance, while wealth and respectability shun its utter indigence.

In the song I have translated above, the longing of the singer to realise the infinite in his own personality is expressed. This has to be done daily by its perfect expression in life, in, love. For the personal expression of life, in its perfection, is love;just as the personal expression of truth in its perfection is beauty.

In the political life of the modern age the idea of democracy has given mankind –faith in the individual. It gives each man trust in his own possibilities, and pride in his humanity. Something of the same idea, we find, has been working in the popular mind of India, with regard to its religions consciousness. Over and over again it tries to assert, not only that God is for each of us,but also that God is in each of us. These people have no special incarnations in their simple theology, because they know that God is special to each individual. They say that to be born a man is the greatest privilege that call fall to a creature in all the world. They assert that gods in Paradis envy human beings. Why? Because God's will, in giving his love, finds its completeness in man's will returning that love. Therefore Humanity is a necessary factor in the perfecting of the divine truth. The infinite, for its self expression, comes down into the manifoldness of the Finite and the Finite, for its self-realization, must rise into the unity of the Infinite. Then is the Cycle of Truth complete

The dignity of man, in his eternal right to Truth, finds expression in the following song, composed, not by a theologian or a man of letters, but by one who belongs to that ninety per cent of the population of British India whose education has been far less than elementary, in fact almost below zero:

My longing is to meet you in play of love, my Lover;
But this longing is not only mine, but also yours.
For your lips can have their smile, and your flute
its music, only in your delight in my love;
and therefore you are importunate, even as I am.

If the world were a mere expression of formative forces, then this song would be pathetic in its presumption. But why is there beauty at all in creation - the beauty whose only meaning is in a call that claims disinterestedness as a response? The poet proudly says: Your flute could not have its music of beauty if your delight were not in my love. Your power is great - and there I am not equal to you - but it lies even in me to make you smile, and if you and I never meet, then this play of love remains incomplete.'

If this were not true, then it would be an utter humiliation to exist at all in this world. If it were solely our business to seek the Lover; and *his* to keep himself passively aloof in the infinity of his glory, or actively masterful only in imposing his commands upon us, then we should dare to defy him, and refuse to accept the everlasting insult latent in the onesided importunity of a slave. And this is what the Baul says- he who, in the world of men, goes about singing for alms from door to door, with his one-stringed instrument and long robe of patched-up rags on his back:

I stop and sit here on the road. Do not ask me to walk farther.
If your love can be complete without mine, let me
turn back from seeing you.
I have been traveling to seek you, my friend, for long;
Yet I refuse to beg a sight of you, if you do not feel my need.
I am blind with market dust and midday glare,
and so wait, my heart's lover, in hopes that
your own love will send you to find me out.

The poet is fully conscious that his value in the world's market is pitifully small; that he is neither wealthy nor learned. Yet he has his great compensation, for he has come close to his Lover's heart. In Bengal the women bathing in the river often use their overturned water jars to keep themselves floating when they swim, and the poet uses this incident for his simile:

It is lucky that I am an empty vessel,
For when you swim, I keep floating by your side.
Your full vessels are left on the empty shore, they are for use;
But I am carried to the river in your arms, and I dance to the
rhythm of your heart-throbs and heaving of the waves.

The great distinguished people of the world do not know that these beggars -deprived of education, honour, and wealth - can, in the pride of their souls, look down upon them as the unfortunate ones, who are left on the shore for their worldly uses, but whose lift ever misses the touch of the Lover's aims.

The feeling that man is not a mere casual visitor at the palace-gate of the world, but the invited guest whose presence is needed to give the royal banquet its sole meaning, is not confined to any particular sect in India. Let me quote here some poems from a mediaeval poet of Western India - Jnandas - whose works are nearly forgotten, and have become scarce from the very exquisiteness of their excellence. In the following poem he is addressing God's messenger, who comes to us in the morning light of our childhood, in the dusk of our day's end, and in the night's darkness:

Messenger, morning brought you, habited in gold.
After sunset, your song wore a tune of ascetic grey.
and then came night.
Your message was written in bright letters across the black.
Why is such splendour about you, to lure the heart
of one who is nothing?

This is the answer of the messenger:

Great is the festival hall where you are to be the only guest.
Therefore the letter to you is written from sky to sky,
And I, the proud servant, bring the invitation with all ceremony.

And thus the poet knows that the silent rows of stars carry God's own invitation to the individual soul. The same poet sings:

What hast thou come to beg from the beggar,
O King of Kings?
My Kingdom is poor for want of him, my dear one,
and I wait for him in sorrow.
How long will you keep him waiting, O wretch,
who has waited for you for ages in silence and stillness?
Open your gate, and make this very moment fit for the union.

It is the song of man's pride in the value given to him by Supreme Love and realized by his own love.

The Vaishnava religion, which has become the popular religion of India, carries the same message: God's love finding its finality in man's love. According to it, the lover, man, is the complement of the Lover, God, in the internal love drama of existence; and God's call is ever wafted in man's heart in the world-music, drawing him towards the union. This idea has been expressed in rich elaboration of symbols verging upon realism. But for these Bauls this idea is direct and simple, full of the dignified beauty of truth, which shuns all tinsels of ornament

The Baul poet, when asked why he had no sect mark on his forehead, answered in his song that the true colour decoration appears on the skin of the fruit when its inner core is filled with ripe, sweet juice; but by artificially smearing it with colour from outside you do not make it ripe. And he says of his Guru, his teacher, that he is puzzled to find in which direction he must make salutation. For his teacher is not one, but many, who, moving on, form a procession of wayfarers.

Bauls have no temple or image for their worship, and this utter simplicity is needful for men whose one subject is to realise the innermost nearness of God. The Baul poet expressly says that if we try to approach God through the senses we miss him:

Bring him not into your house as the guest of your
eyes; but let him come at your heart's invitation.
Opening your doors to that which is seen only, is to lose it

Yet. being a poet, he also knows that the objects of sense can reveal their spiritual meaning only when they are not seen through mere physical eyes;

Eves can see only dust and earth,
But feel it with your heart; it is pure joy.
The flowers of delight blossom on all sides, in every form, but
where is your heart's thread to weave them in a garland?

These Bauls have a philosophy, which they call the philosophy of the .body, but they keep its secret; it is only for the initiated Evidently the underlying idea is that the individual's body is itself the temple, in whose inner mystic shrine the Divine appears before the soul, and the key to it has to be found from those who know. But as the key is not for us outsiders, I leave it with the observation that this mystic philosophy of the body is the outcome of the attempt to get rid of all the outward shelters which are too costly for people like themselves. But this human body of ours is made by God's own hand, from his own love, and even if some men, in the pride of their superiority, may despise it, God finds his joy in dwelling in others of yet lower birth. It is a truth easier of discovery by these people of humble origin than by men of proud estate.

The pride of the Baul beggar is not in his worldly distinction, but in the distinction that God himself has given to him. He feels himself like a flute through which God's own breath of love has been breathed:

My heart is like a flute he has played on.
If ever it fall into other hands,
let him fling it away.
My lover's flute is dear to him.
Therefore, if to-day alien breath have entered it and
sounded stranger notes.
Let him break it to pieces and strew the dust with them.

So we find that this man also has his disgust of defilement While the ambitious world of wealth and power despises him, he in his turn think;, that the world's touch desecrates him who has been made sacred by the touch of his Lover. He does not envy us our life of ambitions and achievements, but he knows how precious his own life has been:

I am poured forth in living notes of joy and sorrow by your breath.
Morning and evening, in summer and in rains, I am fashioned to
music.
Yet should I be wholly spent in some flight of song,
I shall not grieve, the tune is so precious to me.

Our joys and sorrows are contradictory when self separates them in oppositions. But for the heart in which self merges in God's love, they lose their absoluteness. So the Baul's prayer is to feel in all situations in danger, or pain, or sorrow - that he is in God's hands. He solves the problem of emancipation from sufferings by accepting and setting them in a higher context:

I am the boat, you are the sea, and also the boatman.
Though you never make the shore, though you let me sink, why
should I be foolish and afraid?
Is the reaching the shore a greater prize than losing myself with
you?
If you are only the haven, as they say, then what is the sea?
Let it surge and toss me on its waves, I shall be content.
I live in you, whatever and however you appear.

Save me or kill me as you wish, only never leave me in

others' hands.

III

It is needless to say, before I conclude,that I had neither the training nor the opportunity to study this mendicant religious sect in Bengal from an ethnological standpoint. I was attracted to find out how the living currents of religious movements work in the heart of the people, saving them from degradation imposed by the society of the learned, of the rich, or of the highborn; how the spirit of man, by making use even of its obstacles, reaches fulfilment, led thither, not by the learned authorities in the scriptures, or by the mechanical impulse of the dogma-driven crowd, but by the unsophisticated aspiration of the loving soul. On the inaccessible mountain peaks of theology the snows of creed remain eternally rigid, cold, and pure. But God's manifest shower falls direct on the plain of humble hearts, flowing there in various channels, even getting mixed with some mud in its course, as it is soaked into the underground currents, invisible, but ever-moving.

I can think of nothing better than to conclude my paper with a poem of Jnandas, in which the aspiration of all simple spirits has found a devout expression:

I had traveled all day and was fired; then I bowed my
head towards thy kingly court still far away.
The night deepened, a longing burned in my hear.
Whatever the words I sang, pain cried through
them - for even my songs thirsted-
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.
When time seemed lost in darkness,
thy hand dropped its scepter to take up the lute
and strike the uttermost chords;
And my heart sang out,
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.

Ah, who is this whose arms enfold me?
Whatever I have to leave, let me leave; let me leave;
and whatever I have to bear, let me bear.
Only let me walk with thee,
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.
Descend at whiles from thy high audience hall, come
down amid joys and sorrows.
Hide in all forms and delights, in love,
And in my heart sing thy songs,
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.

East and West

1

IT is not always a profound interest in man that carries travelers nowadays to distant lands. More often it is the facility for rapid movement. For lack of time and for the sake of convenience we generalise and crush our human facts into the packages within the steel trucks that hold our travellers' reports.

Our knowledge of our own countrymen and our feelings about them have slowly and unconsciously grown out of innumerable facts which are full of contradictions and subject to incessant change. They have the elusive mystery and fluidity of life. We cannot define to ourselves what we are as a whole, because we know too much; because our knowledge is more than knowledge. It is an immediate consciousness of personality, and evaluation of which carries some emotion, joy or sorrow, shame or exaltation. But in a foreign land we try to find our compensation for the meagerness of our data by the compactness of the generalisation which our imperfect sympathy itself helps us to form. When a stranger from the West travels in the Eastern world he takes the facts that displease him and readily makes use of them for his rigid conclusions, fixed upon the unchallengeable authority of his personal experience. It is like a man, who has his own boat for crossing his village steam, but, on being compelled to wade across some strange watercourse, draws angry comparisons as he goes from every patch of mud and every pebble which his feet encounter.

Our mind has faculties which are universal, but its habits are insular. There are men who become impatient and angry at the least discomfort when their habits are incommoded. In their idea of the next world they probably conjure up the ghosts of their slippers and dressing-gowns, and expect the latchkey that opens their lodging-house door on earth to fit their front door in the other world. As travelers they are a failure; for they have grown too accustomed to their mental easy-chairs, and in their intellectual nature love home comforts, which are of local make, more than the realities of life, which, like earth itself, are full of ups and downs, yet are one in their rounded completeness.

The modern age has brought the geography of the earth near to us, but made it difficult for us to come into touch with man. We go to strange lands and observe; we do not live there. We hardly meet men: but only specimens of knowledge. We are in haste to seek for general types and overlook individuals.

When we fall into the habit of neglecting to use the understanding that comes of sympathy in our travels, our knowledge of foreign people grows insensitive, and therefore easily becomes both unjust and cruel in its character, and also selfish and contemptuous in its application. Such has, too often, been the case with regard to the meeting of Western

people in our days with others for whom they do not recognise any obligation of kinship.

It has been admitted that the dealings between different races of men are not merely between individuals; that our mutual understanding is either aided, or else obstructed, by the general emanations forming the social atmosphere. These emanations are our collective ideas and collective feelings, generated according to special historical circumstances.

For instance, the caste-idea is a collective idea in India. When we approach an Indian who is under the influence of this collective idea, he is no longer a pure individual with his conscience fully awake to the judging of the value of a human being. He is more or less a passive medium for giving expression to the sentiment of a whole community.

It is evident that the caste-idea is not creative; it is merely institutional. It adjusts human beings according to some mechanical arrangement. It emphasizes the negative side of the individual - his separateness. It hurts the complete truth in man.

In the West, also, the people have a certain collective idea that obscures their humanity. Let me try to explain what I feel about it.

II

Lately I went to visit some battlefields of France which had been devastated by war. The awful calm of desolation, which still bore wrinkles of pain - death-struggles stiffened into ugly ridges - brought before my mind the vision of a huge demon, which had no shape, no meaning, yet had two arms that could strike and break and tear, a gaping mouth that could devour, and bulging brains that could conspire and plan. It was a purpose, which had a living body, but no complete humanity to temper it. Because it was passion - belonging to life, and yet not having the wholeness of life - it was the most terrible of life's enemies.

Something of the same sense of oppression in a different degree, the same desolation in a different aspect, is produced in my mind when I realise the effect of the West upon Eastern life-the West which, in its relation to us, is all plan and purpose incarnate, without any superfluous humanity.

I feel the contrast very strongly in Japan. In that country the old world presents itself with some ideal of perfection, in which man has his varied opportunities of self-revelation in art, in ceremonial, in religious faith, and in customs expressing the poetry of social relationship. There one feels that deep delight of hospitality which life offers to life. And side by side, in the same soil-, stands the modern world, which is stupendously big and powerful, but inhospitable. It has no simple-hearted welcome for man. It is living; yet the incompleteness of life's ideal within it cannot but hurt humanity.

The wriggling tentacles of a cold-blooded utilitarianism, with which the West has grasped all the easily yielding succulent portions of the East, are causing pain and indignation throughout the Eastern countries. The West comes to us, not with the imagination and sympathy that create and unite, but with a shock of passion-passion for power and wealth. This passion is a mere force, which has in it the principle of separation, of conflict.

I have been fortunate in coming into close touch with individual men and women of the Western countries, and have felt with them their sorrows and shared their aspirations. I have known that they seek the same God, who is my God - even those who deny Him. I feel certain that, if the great light of culture be extinct in Europe, our horizon in the East will mourn in darkness. It does not hurt my pride to acknowledge that, in the present age, Western humanity has received its mission to be the teacher of the world; that her science, through the mastery of laws of nature, is to liberate human souls from the dark dungeon of matter. For this very reason I have realised all the more strongly, on the other hand, that the dominant collective idea in the Western countries is not creative. It is ready to enslave or kill individuals, to drug a great people with soulkilling poison, darkening their whole future with the black mist of stupefaction, and emasculating entire races of men to the utmost degree of helplessness. It is wholly wanting in spiritual power to blend and harmonize; it lacks the sense of the great personality of man.

The most significant fact of modern days is this, that the West has met the East Such a momentous meeting of humanity, in order to be fruitful, must have in its heart some great emotional idea, generous and creative. There can be no doubt that God's choice has fallen upon the knights-errant of the West for the service of the present age; arms and armour have been given to them; but have they yet realized in their hearts the single-minded loyalty to their cause which can resist all temptations of bribery from the devil? The world to-day is offered to the West. She will destroy it, if she does not use it for a great creation of man. The materials for such a creation are in the hands of science; but the creative genius is in Man's spiritual ideal.

III

When I was young a stranger from Europe came to Bengal. He chose his lodging among the people of the country, shared with them their frugal diet, and freely offered them his service. He found employment in the houses of the rich, teaching them French and German, and the money thus earned he spent to help poor students in buying books. This meant for him hours of walking in the mid-day heat of a tropical summer; for intent upon exercising the utmost economy, he refused to hire conveyances. He was pitiless in his exaction from himself of his resources, in money, time, and strength, to the point of privation; and all this for the sake of a people who were obscure, to whom he was not born, yet whom he dearly loved. He did not come to us with a professional mission of teaching sectarian creeds; he had not in his nature the least trace of that self-sufficiency of goodness, which humiliates

by gifts the victims of its insolent benevolence. Though he did not know our language, he took every occasion to frequent our meetings and ceremonies; yet he was always afraid of intrusion, and tenderly anxious lest he might offend us by his ignorance of our customs. At last, under the continual strain of work in an alien climate and surroundings, his health broke down. He died, and was cremated at our burning-ground, according to his express desire.

The attitude of his mind, the manner of his living, the object of his life, his modesty, his unstinted self-sacrifice for a people who had not even the power to give publicity to any benefaction bestowed upon them, were so utterly unlike anything we were accustomed to associate with the Europeans in India, that it gave rise in our mind to a feeling of love bordering upon awe.

We all have a realm, a private paradise, in our mind, where dwell deathless memories of persons who brought some divine light to our life's experience, who may not be known to others, and whose names have no place in the pages of history. Let me confess to you that this man lives as one of those immortals in the paradise of my individual life.

He came from Sweden, his name was Hammargren. What was most remarkable in the event of his coming to us in Bengal was the fact that in his own country he had chanced to read some works of my great countryman, Ram Mohan Roy, and felt an immense veneration for his genius and his character. Ram Mohan Roy lived in the beginning of the last century, and it is no exaggeration when I describe him as one of the immortal personalities of modern time. This young Swede had the unusual gift of a farsighted intellect and sympathy which enabled him even from his distance of space and time, in spite of racial differences, to realize the greatness of Ram Mohan Roy. It moved him so deeply that he resolved to go to the country which produced this great man, and offer her his service. He was poor, and he had to wait some time in England before he could earn his passage money to India. There he came at last, and in reckless generosity of love utterly spent himself to the last breath of his life, away from home and kindred and all the inheritances of his motherland. His stay among us was too short to produce any outward result. He failed even to achieve during his life what he had in his mind, which was to found by the help of his scanty earnings a library as a memorial to Ram Mohan Roy, and thus to leave behind him a visible symbol of his devotion. But what I prize most in this European youth, who left no record of his life behind him, is not the memory of any service of goodwill, but the precious gift of respect which he offered to a people who are fallen upon evil times, and whom it is so easy to ignore or to humiliate. for the first time in the modern days this obscure individual from Sweden brought to our country the chivalrous courtesy of the West, a greeting of human fellowship

The coincidence came to me with a great and delightful surprise when the Nobel Prize was offered to me from Sweden. As a recognition of individual merit it was of great value to me, no doubt; but it was the acknowledgement of the East as a collaborator with the Western continents, in contributing its riches to the common stock of civilization, which had the chief significance for the present age. It meant joining hands in comradeship by the two great hemispheres of the human world across the sea.

IV

To-day the real East remains unexplored. The blindness of contempt is more hopeless than the blindness of ignorance; for contempt kills the light which ignorance merely leaves unignited. The East is waiting to be understood by the Western races, in order not only to be able to give what is true in her, but also to be confident of her own mission.

In Indian history, the meeting of the Mussulman and the Hindu produced Akbar, the object of whose dream was the unification of hearts and ideals. It had all the glowing enthusiasm of a religion, and it produced an immediate and a vast result even in his own lifetime.

But the fact still remains that the Western mind, after centuries of contact with the East, has not evolved the enthusiasm of a chivalrous ideal which can bring this age to its fulfilment. It is everywhere raising thorny hedges of exclusion and offering human sacrifices to national self-seeking. It has intensified the mutual feelings of envy among Western races themselves, as they fight over their spoils and display a carnivorous pride in their snarling rows of teeth.

We must again guard our minds from any encroaching distrust of the individuals of a nation. The active love of humanity and the spirit of martyrdom for the cause of justice and truth which I have met with in the Western countries have been a great lesson and inspiration to me. I have no doubt in my mind that the West owes its true greatness, not so much to its marvellous training of intellect, as to its spirit of service devoted to the welfare of man. Therefore I speak with a personal feeling of pain and sadness about the collective power which is guiding the helm of Western civilization. It is a passion, not an ideal. The more success it has brought to Europe, the more costly it will prove to her at last, when the accounts have to be rendered. And the signs are unmistakable, that the accounts have been called for. The time has come when Europe must know that the forcible parasitism which she has been practising upon the two large Continents of the world - the two most unwieldy whales of humanity - must be causing to her moral nature a gradual atrophy and degeneration.

As an example, let me quote the following extract from the concluding chapter of *From the Cape to Cairo,* by Messrs. Grogan and Sharp, two writers who have the power to inculcate their doctrines by precept and example. In their reference to the African they are candid, as when they say, 'We have stolen his land. Now we must steal his limbs.' These two sentences, carefully articulated, with a smack of enjoyment, have been more clearly explained in the following statement,

where some sense of that decency which is the attenuated ghost of a buried conscience, prompts the writers to use the phrase 'compulsory labour' in place of the honest word 'slavery'; just as the modern politician adroitly avoids the word injunction' and uses the word 'mandate.' 'Compulsory labour in some form,' they say, 'is the corollary of our occupation of the country.' And they add: 'It is pathetic, but it is history,' implying thereby that moral sentiments have no serious effect in the history of human beings.

Elsewhere they write: 'Either we must give up the country commercially, or we must make the African work. And mere abuse of those who point out the impasse cannot change the facts. We must decide, and soon. Or rather the white man of South Africa will decide.' The authors also confess that they have seen too much of the world 'to have any lingering belief that Western civilization benefits native races.'

The logic is simple - the logic of egoism. But the argument is simplified by lopping off the greater part of the premise. For these writers seem to hold that the only important question for the white men of South Africa is, how indefinitely to grow fat on ostrich feathers and diamond mines, and dance jazz dances over the misery and degradation of a whole race of fellow-beings of a different colour from their own. Possibly they believe that moral laws have a special domesticated breed of comfortable concessions for the service of the people in power. Possibly they ignore the fact that commercial and political cannibalism, profitably practised upon foreign races, creeps back nearer home; that the cultivation of unwholesome appetites has its final reckoning with the stomach which has been made to serve it. For, after all, man is a spiritual being, and not a mere living money-bag jumping from profit to profit, and breaking the backbone of human races in its financial leapfrog.

Such, however, has been the condition of things for more than a century; and to-day, trying to read the future by the light of the European conflagration, we are asking ourselves everywhere in the East: 'Is this frightfully overgrown power really great? It can bruise us from without, but can it add to our wealth of spirit? It can sign peace treaties, but can it give peace?'

It was about two thousand years ago that all-powerful Rome in one of its eastern provinces executed on a cross a simple teacher of an obscure tribe of fishermen. On that day the Roman governor felt no falling off of his appetite or sleep. On that day there was, on the one hand, the agony, the humiliation, the death; on the other, the pomp of pride and festivity in the Governor's palace.

And to-day? To whom, then, shall we bow the head?

Kasmai devaya havisha vidhema?
(To which God shall we offer oblation?)

We know of all instance in our own history of India, when a great personality, both in his life and voice, struck the keynote of the solemn music of the soul-love for all creatures. And that music crossed seas, mountains, and deserts. Races belonging to different climates, habits, and languages were drawn together, not in the clash of arms, not in the conflict of exploitation, but in harmony of life, in amity and peace. That was creation.

When we think of it, we see at once what the confusion of thought was to which the Western poet, dwelling upon the difference between East and West, referred when he said, 'Never the twain shall meet.' It is true that they are not yet showing any real sign of meeting. But the reason is because the West has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine. Therefore the poet's line has to be changed into something like this:

Man is man, machine is machine,
And never the twain shall wed.

You must know that red tape can never be a common human bond; that official sealing-wax can never provide means of mutual attachment; that it is a painful ordeal for human beings to have to receive favours from animated pigeon-holes, and condescensions from printed circulars that give notice but never speak. The presence of the Western people in the East is a human fact If we are to gain anything from them, it must not be a mere sum-total of legal codes and systems of civil and military service. Man is a great deal more to man than that. We have our human birthright to claim direct help from the man of the West, if he has anything great to give us. It must come to us, not through mere facts in a juxtaposition, but through the spontaneous sacrifice made by those who have the gift, and therefore the responsibility.

Earnestly I ask. the poet of the Western world to realise and sing to you with all the great power of music which he has, that the East and the West are ever in search of each other, and that they must meet not merely in the fullness of physical strength, but in fullness of truth; that the right hand, which wields the sword, has the need of the left, which holds the shield of safety.

The East has its seat in the vast plains watched over by the snowpeaked mountains and fertilised by rivers carrying mighty volumes of water to the sea. There, under the blaze of a tropical sun, the physical life has bedimmed the light of its vigour and lessened its claims.There man has had the repose of mind which has ever tried to set itself in harmony with the inner notes of existence. In the silence of sunrise and sunset, and on star-crowded nights, he has sat face to face with the infinite, waiting for the revelation that opens up the heart of all that there is. He has said, in a rapture of realization:

'Hearken to me, ye children of the Immortal, who dwell in the Kingdom of Heaven. I have known, from beyond darkness, the Supreme Person, shining with the radiance of the sun.'

The man from the East, with his faith in the eternal, who in his soul had met the touch of the Supreme Person - did he never come to you in the West and speak to you of the Kingdom of Heaven? Did he not unite the East and the West in truth, in the unity of one spiritual bond between all children

of the Immortal, in the realization of one great Personality in all human persons?

Yes, the East did once meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union became possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance.

On the other hand, the East must find her own balance in Science the magnificent gift that the West can bring to her. Truth has its nest as well as its sky. That nest is definite in structure, accurate in law of construction; and though it has to be changed and rebuilt over and over again, the need of it is never-ending and its laws are eternal. For some centuries the East has neglected the nest-building of truth. She has not been attentive to learn its secret. Trying to cross the trackless infinite, the East has relied solely upon her wings. She has spurned the earth, till, buffeted by storms, her wings are hurt and she is tired, sorely needing help. But has she then to be told that the messenger of the sky and the builder of the nest shall never meet?

The Modern Age

I

WHEREVER man meets man in a living relationship, the meeting finds its natural expression in works of art, the signatures of beauty, in which the mingling of the personal touch leaves its memorial.

On the other hand, a relationship of pure utility humiliates man it ignores the rights and needs of his deeper nature; it feels no compunction in maltreating and killing things of beauty that can never be restored.

Some years ago, when I set out from Calcutta on my voyage to Japan, the first thing that shocked me, with a sense of personal injury, was the ruthless intrusion of the factories for making gunny-bags on both banks of the Ganges. The blow it gave to me was owing to the precious memory of the days of my boyhood, when the scenery of this river was the only great thing near my birthplace reminding me of the existence of a world which had its direct communication with our innermost spirit.

Calcutta is an upstart town with no depth of sentiment in her face and in her manners. It may truly be said about her genesis: - In the beginning there was the spirit of the Shop, which uttered through its megaphone, 'Let there be the Office!' and there was Calcutta. She brought with her no dower of distinction, no majesty of noble or romantic origin; she never gathered around her any -great historical associations, any annals of brave sufferings, or memory of mighty deeds. The only thing which gave her the sacred baptism of beauty was the river. I was fortunate enough to be born before the smoke-belching iron dragon had devoured the greater part of the life of its banks; when the landing-stairs descending into its waters, caressed by its tides, appeared to me like the loving arms of the villages clinging to it; when Calcutta, with her uptilted nose and stony stare, had not completely disowned her fostermother, rural Bengal, and had not surrendered body and soul to her wealthy paramour, the spirit of the ledger, bound in dead leather.

But as an instance of the contrast of the different ideal of a different age, incarnated in the form of a town, the memory of my last visit to Benares comes to my mind. What impressed me most deeply, while I was there, was the mother-call of the river Ganges, ever filling the atmosphere with an 'unheard melody,' attracting the whole population to its bosom every hour of the day. I am proud of the fact that India has felt a most profound love for this river, which nourishes civilization on its banks, guiding its course from the silence of the hills to the sea with its myriad voices of solitude. 'The love of this river, which has become one with the love of the best in man, has given rise to this town as an expression of reverence. This is to show that there are sentiments in us which are creative, which do not clamour for gain, but overflow in gifts, in spontaneous generosity of self-sacrifice.

But our minds will nevermore cease to be haunted by the perturbed spirit of the question, 'What about gunny-bags?' I admit they are indispensable, and am willing to allow them a place in society, if my opponent will only admit that even gunny-bags should have their limits, and will acknowledge the importance of leisure to man, with space for joy and worship, and a home of wholesale privacy, with associations of chaste love and mutual service. If this concession to humanity be denied or curtailed, and if profit and production are allowed to run amuck, they will play havoc with our love of beauty, of truth of justice, and also with our love for our fellow-beings. So it comes about that the peasant cultivators of jute, who live on the brink of everlasting famine, are combined against, and driven to lower the price of their labours to the point of blank despair, by those who earn more than cent per cent profit and wallow in the infamy of their wealth. The facts that man is brave and kind, that he is social and generous and self-sacrificing, have some aspect of the complete in them; but the fact that he is a manufacturer of gunnybags is too ridiculously small to claim the right of reducing his higher nature to insignificance. The fragmentariness of utility should never forget its subordinate position in human affairs. It must not be permitted to occupy more than its legitimate place and power in society, nor to have the liberty to desecrate the poetry of life, to deaden our sensitiveness to ideals, bragging of its own coarseness as a sign of virility. The pity is that when in the centre of our activities we acknowledge, by some proud name, the supremacy of wanton destructiveness, or production not less wanton, we shut out all the lights of our souls, and in that darkness our conscience and our consciousness of shame are hidden, and our love of freedom is killed.

I do not for a moment mean to imply that in any particular period of history men were free from the disturbance of their lower passions. Selfishness ever had its share in government and trade. Yet there was a struggle to maintain a balance of forces in society; and our passions cherished no delusions about their own rank and value. They contrived no clever devices to hoodwink our moral nature. For in those days our intellect was not tempted to put its weight into the balance on the side of over-greed.

But in recent centuries a devastating change has come over our mentality with regard to the acquisition of money. Whereas in former ages even treated it with condescension, even with disrespect, now they bend their knees to it. That it should be allowed a sufficiently large place in society, there can be no question; but it becomes an outrage when it occupies those seats which are specially reserved for the immortals, by bribing its, tampering with our moral pride, recruiting the best strength of society in a traitor's campaign against human ideals, thus disguising, with the help of pomp and pageantry, its true insignificance. Such a state of things has come to pass because, with the help of science, the possibilities of profit have suddenly become immoderate. The whole of the human world, throughout its length and breadth, has felt the gravitational pull of a giant planet of greed, with concentric rings of innumerable satellites, causing in our society a marked deviation from the moral orbit. In former times the intellectual and spiritual powers of this earth upheld their dignity of independence and were not giddily rocked on the tides of the money market. But, as in the last fatal stages of disease, this fatal influence of money has got into our brain and affected our heart. Like a usurper, it has occupied the throne of high social ideals, using every means, by menace and threat, to seize upon the right, and, tempted by opportunity, presuming to judge it. It has not only science for its ally, but other forces also that have some semblance of religion, such as nation-,worship and the idealising of organised selfishness. Its methods are far-reaching and sure. Like the claws of a tiger's paw, they are softly sheathed. Its massacres are invisible, because they are fundamental, attacking the very roots of life. Its plunder is ruthless behind a scientific system of screens, which have the formal appearance of being open and responsible to inquiries. By whitewashing its stains it keeps its respectability unblemished. It makes a liberal use of falsehood in diplomacy, only feeling embarrassed when its evidence is disclosed by others of the trade. An unscrupulous system of propaganda paves the sway for widespread misrepresentation. It works up the crowd psychology through regulated hypnotic doses at repeated intervals, administered in bottles with moral labels upon them of soothing colours. In fact, man has been able to make his pursuit of power easier to-day by his art of mitigating the obstructive forces that come front the higher region of his Humanity. Within his cult of powers and his idolatry of money he has, in a great measure, reverted to his primitive barbarism, a barbarism whose path is lit up by the lurid light of intellect For barbarism is the simplicity of a superficial life. It may be bewildering in its surface adornments and complexities, but it lacks the ideal to impart to it the depth of moral responsibility.

II

Society suffers from a profound feeling of unhappiness, not so much when it is in material poverty as when its members are deprived of a large part of their humanity. This unhappiness goes on smouldering in the subconscious mind of the community till its life is reduced to ashes or a sudden combustion is produced. The repressed personality of man generates an inflammable moral gas deadly in its explosive force.

We have seen in the late war, and also in some of the still more recent events of history, how human individuals freed from moral and spiritual bonds find a boisterous joy in a debauchery of destruction. There is generated a disinterested passion of ravage. Through such catastrophe we can realize what formidable forces of annihilation are kept in check in our communities by bonds of social ideas; nay, made into multitudinous manifestations of beauty and fruitfulness. Thus we know that evils are, like meteors, stray fragments of life, which need the attraction of some great ideal in order to be assimilated with the wholesomeness of creation. The evil forces are literally outlaws; they only need the control and cadence of spiritual laws to change them into good. The true

goodness is not the negation of badness, it is in the mastery of it. Goodness is the miracle which turns the tumult of chaos into a dance of beauty.

In modern society the ideal of wholeness has lost its force. Therefore its different sections have become detached and resolved into their elemental character of forces. Labour is a force; so also is Capital; so are the Government and the People; so are .Man and Woman. It is said that when the forces lying latent in even a handful of dust are liberated from their bond of unity, they can lift the buildings of a whole neighbourhood to the height of a mountain. Such disfranchised forces, irresponsible freebooters, may be useful to its for certain purposes, but human habitations standing secure on their foundations are better for us. To own the secret of utilising these forces is a proud fact for its, but the power of self-control and the self-dedication of love are truer subjects for the exultation of mankind. The genii of the Arabian Nights may have in their magic their lure and fascination for us. But the consciousness, of God is of another order, infinitely more precious in imparting to our minds ideas of the spiritual power of creation. Yet these genii are abroad everywhere; and even now, after the late war, their devotees are getting ready to play further tricks upon humanity by suddenly spiriting it away to some hill-top of desolation.

III

We know that when, at first, any large body of people in their history became aware of their unity, they expressed it in some popular symbol of divinity. For they felt that their combination was not an arithmetical ones; its truth was deeper than the truth of number. They felt that their community was not a mere agglutination but a creation, having upon it the living touch of the infinite Person. The realization of this truth having been an end in itself, a fulfilinent, it gave meaning to self-sacrifice, to the acceptance even of death.

But our modern education is producing a habit of mind which is ever weakening in us the spiritual apprehension of truth - the truth of a person as the ultimate reality of existence. Science has its proper sphere in a analysing this world as a construction, just as grammar has its legitimate office in analysing the syntax of a poem. But the world, as a creation, is not a mere construction; it too is more than a syntax. It is a poem, which we are apt to forget when grammar takes exclusive hold of our minds.

Upon the loss of this sense of a universal personality, which is religion, the reign of the machine and of method has been firmly established, and man, humanly speaking, has been made a homeless tramp. As nomads, ravenous and restless, the men from the West have come to us. They have exploited our Eastern humanity for sheer gain of power. This modern meeting of men has not yet received the blessing of God. For it has kept its apart, though railway lines are laid far and wide, and ships are plying from shore to shore to bring its together.

It has been said in the Upanishads:

Yastu sarvani bhutani atmayevaupashyati
Sarva bhuteshu chatmanam na tato vijugupsate

(He who sees all things in atma, in the infinite spirit, and the infinite spirit in all beings, remains no longer unrevealed.)

In the modern civilization, for which an enormous number of men are used as materials, and human relationships have in a large measure become utilitarian, man is imperfectly revealed. For man's revelation does not lie in the fact that he is a power, but that he is a spirit. The prevalence of the theory which realizes the power of the machine in the universe, and organises men into machines, is like the eruption of Etna, tremendous in its force, in its outburst of fire and fume; but its creeping lava covers up human shelters made by the ages, and its ashes smother life.

IV

The terribly efficient method of repressing personality in the individuals and the races who have failed to resist it has, in the present scientific age, spread all over the world; and in consequence there have appeared signs of a universal disruption which seems not far off. Faced with the possibility of such a disaster, which is sure to affect the successful peoples of the world in their intemperate prosperity, the great Powers of the West are seeking peace, not by curbing their greed, or by giving up the exclusive advantages which they have unjustly acquired, but by concentrating their forces for mutual security.

But can powers find their equilibrium in themselves? Power has to be made secure not only against power, but also against weakness; for there lies the peril of its losing balance. The weak are as great a danger for the strong as quicksands for all elephant. They do not assist progress because they do not resist; they only drag down. The people who grow accustomed to wield absolute power over others are apt to forget that by so doing they generate an unseen force which some day rends that power into pieces. The dumb fury of the downtrodden finds its awful support from the universal law of moral balance. The air which is so thin and unsubstantial gives birth to storms that nothing can resist. This has been proved in history over and over again, and stormy forces arising from the revolt of insulted humanity are openly gathering in the air at the present time.

Yet in the psychology of the strong the lesson is despised and no count taken of the terribleness of the weak. This is the latent ignorance that, like an unsuspected worm, burrows under the bulk of the prosperous. Have we never read of the castle of power, securely buttressed on all sides, in a moment dissolving in air at file explosion caused by the weak and outraged besiegers? Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are kept on the sword-hilts: they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless and waits its time.

The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own league alone with their God. I know 1 am crying in the wilderness when I raise the voice of warning; and while the West is busy with its organization of a machinemade peace, it will still continue to nourish by its iniquities the underground forces of earthquake in the Eastern Continent. The West seems unconscious that Science, by providing it with more and more power, is tempting it to suicide and encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed; it does not know that the challenge comes from a higher source.

Two prophecies about the world's salvation are cherished in the hearts of the two great religions of the world. They represent the highest expectation of man, thereby indicating his faith in a truth which he instinctively considers as ultimate -the truth of love. These prophecies have not for their vision the fettering of the world and reducing it to tameness by means of a close-linked power forged in the factory of a political steel trust. One of the religions has for its meditation the image of the Buddha who is to come, Maitreya, the Buddha of love; and he is to bring peace. The other religion waits for the coming of Christ. For Christ preached peace when he preached love, when he preached the oneness of the Father with the brothers who are many. And this was the truth of peace. Christ never held that peace was the best policy. For policy is not truth. The calculation of self-interest can never successfully fight the irrational force of passion - the passion which is perversion of love, and which can only be set right by the truth of love. So long as the powers build a league on the foundation of their desire for safety, secure enjoyment of gains, consolidation of past injustice, and putting off the reparation of wrongs, while their fingers still wriggle for greed and reek of blood, rifts will appear in their union; and in future their conflicts will take greater force and magnitude. It is political and commercial egoism which is the evil harbinger of war. By different combinations it changes its shape and dimensions, but not its nature. This egoism is still held sacred, and made a religion; and such a religion, by a mere change of temple, and by new committees of priests, will never save mankind. We must know that, as, through science and commerce, the realization of the unity of the material world gives us power, so the realization of the great spiritual Unity of Man alone can give us peace.

The Spirit of Freedom

A LETTER FROM NEW YORK TO THE AUTHOR'S OWN COUNTRYMEN

When Freedom is not an inner idea which imparts strength to our activities and breadth to our creations, when it is merely a thing of eternal circumstance, it is like an open space to one who is blindfolded.

In my recent travels in the West I have felt that out there freedom as art idea has become feeble and ineffectual. Consequently a spirit of repression and coercion is fast spreading in the politics and social relationships of the people.

In the age of monarchy the king lived surrounded by a miasma of intrigue. At court there was an endless whispering of lies and calumny, and much plotting and planning among the conspiring courtiers to manipulate the king as the instrument of their own purposes.

In the present age intrigue plays a wider part, and affects tile whole country. The people are drugged with the hashish of false hopes and urged to deeds of frightfulness by the goadings of manufactured panics; their higher feelings are exploited by devious channels of unctuous hypocrisy, their pockets picked under anaesthetics of flattery, their very psychology affected by a conspiracy of money and unserupulous diplomacy.

In the old order the king was given to understand that he was the freest individual in the world. A greater semblance of external freedom, no doubt, he had than other individuals. But they built for him a gorgeous prison of unreality.

The same thing is happening now with the people of the West. They are flattered into believing that they are free, and they have the sovereign power in their hands. But this power is robbed by hosts of self-seekers, and the horse is captured and stabled because of this gift of freedom over space. The mob-mind is allowed the enjoyment of an apparent liberty, while its true freedom is curtailed on every side. Its thoughts are fashioned according to the plans of organised interests; in its choosing of ideas and forming of opinions it is hindered either by some punitive force or by the constant insinuation of untruths; it is made in an artificial world of hypnotic phrases. In fact, the people have become the storehouse of a power that attracts round it a swarm of adventurers who are secretly investing its walls to exploit it for their own devices.

Thus it has become more and more evident to me that the ideal of freedom has grown tenuous in the atmosphere of the West. The mentality is that of a slave-owning community, with a mutilated multitude of men tied to its commercial and political treadmill. It is the mentality of mutual distrust and fear. The appalling scenes of inhumanity and injustice, which are growing familiar to us, are the outcome of a psychology that deals with terror. No cruelty can be uglier in its ferocity than the cruelty of the coward. The people who have sacrificed their souls to the passion of profit-making and the

drunkenness of power are constantly pursued by phantoms of panic and suspicion, and therefore they. are ruthless even where they are least afraid of mischances. They become morally incapable of allowing freedom to others, and in their eagerness to curry favour with the powerful they not only connive at the injustice done by their own partners in political gambling, but participate in it. A perpetual anxiety for the protection of their gains at any cost strikes at the love of freedom and justice, until at length they are ready to forgo liberty for themselves and for others.

My experience in the West, where I have realized the immense power of money and of organized propaganda, - working everywhere behind screens of camouflage, creating an atmosphere of distrust,

timidity, and antipathy, - has impressed me deeply with the truth that real freedom is of the mind and spirit; it can never come to us from outside. He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others. He who cares to have slaves must chain himself to them; he who builds walls to create exclusion for others builds walls across his own freedom; he who distrusts freedom in others loses his moral right to it. Sooner or later he is lured into the meshes of physical and moral servility.

Therefore I would urge my own countrymen to ask themselves if the freedom to which they aspire is one of external conditions. Is it merely a transferable commodity? Have they acquired a true love of freedom7 Have they faith in it? Are they ready to make space in their society for the minds of their children to grow up in the ideal of human dignity, unhindered by restrictions that are unjust and irrational?

Have we not made elaborately permanent the walls of our social compartments? We are tenaciously proud of their exclusiveness. We boast that, in this world, no other society but our own has come to finality in the classifying of its living members. Yet in our political agitations we conveniently forget that any unnaturalness in the relationship of governors and governed which humiliates us, becomes an outrage when it is artificially fixed under the threat of military persecution.

When India gave voice to immortal thoughts, in the time of fullest vigour of vitality, her children had the fearless spirit of the seekers of truth. The great epic of the soul of our people - the Mahabharata gives us a wonderful vision of an overflowing life, full of the freedom of inquiry and experiment. When the age of the Buddha came, humanity was stirred in our country to its uttermost depth. The freedom of mind which it produced expressed itself in a wealth of creation, spreading everywhere in its richness over the continent of Asia. But with the ebb of life in India the spirit of creation died away. It hardened into an age of inert construction. The organic unity of a varied and elastic society gave way to a conventional order which proved its artificial character by its inexorable law of exclusion.

Life has its inequalities, I admit, but they are natural and are in harmony with our vital functions. The head keeps its place apart from the feet, not through some external arrangement or any conspiracy of coercion. If the body is compelled to turn somersaults for an indefinite period, the head never exchanges its relative function for that of the feet. But have our social divisions the same inevitableness of organic law? If we have the hardihood to say 'yes' to that question, then how can we blame an alien people for subjecting us to a political order which they are tempted to believe eternal?

By squeezing human beings in the grip of an inelastic system and forcibly holding them fixed, we have ignored the laws of life and growth. We have forced living souls into a permanent passivity, making them incapable of moulding circumstance to their own intrinsic design, and of mastering their own destiny. Borrowing our ideal of life from a dark period of our degeneracy, we have covered up our sensitiveness of soul under the immovable weight of a remote past. We have set up an elaborate ceremonial of cage-worship, and plucked all the feathers from the wings of the living spirit of our people. And for us, - with our centuries of degradation and insult, with the amorphousness of our n national unit, with our helplessness before the attack of disasters from without and our unreasoning self-obstructions from within, - the punishment has been terrible. Our stupefaction has become so absolute that we do not even realize that this persistent misfortune, dogging our steps for ages, cannot be a mere accident of history, removable only by another accident from outside.

Unless we have true faith in freedom, knowing it to be creative, manfully taking all its risks, not only do we lose the right to claim freedom in politics, but we also lack the power to maintain it with all our strength. For that would be like assigning the service of God to a confirmed atheist. And men, who contemptuously treat their own brothers and sisters as eternal babies, never to be trusted in the most trivial details of their personal life, - coercing them at every step by the cruel treat of -persecution into following a blind lane leading to nowhere, driving a number of them into hypocrisy and into moral inertia,- will fail over and over again to rise to the height of their true and severe responsibility. They will be incapable of holding a just freedom in politics, and of fighting in freedom's cause.

The civilization of the West has in it the spirit of the machine which must move; and to that blind movement human lives are offered as fuel, keeping up the steam-power. It represents the active aspect of inertia which has the appearance of freedom, but not its truth, and therefore gives rise to slavery both within its boundaries and outside. The present civilization of India has the constraining power of the mould. It squeezes living man in the grip of rigid regulations, and its repression of individual freedom makes it only too easy for men to be forced into submission of all kinds and degrees. In both of these traditions life is offered up to something which is not life; it is a sacrifice, which has no God for its worship, and is therefore utterly in vain. The West is continually producing mechanical power in excess of its spiritual control, and India has produced a system of mechanical control in excess of its vitality.

The Nation

THE people are living beings. They have their distinct personalities. But nations are organizations of power, and therefore their inner aspects and outward expressions are everywhere monotonously the same. Their differences are merely differences in degree of efficiency.

In the modern world the fight is going on between the living spirit of the people and the methods of nation-organizing. It is like the struggle that began in Central Asia between cultivated areas of man's habitation and the continually encroaching desert sands, till the human region of life and beauty was choked out of existence. When the spread of higher ideals of humanity is not held to be important, the hardening method of national efficiency gains a certain strength; and for some limited period of time, at least, it proudly asserts itself as the fittest to survive. But it is the survival of that part of man which is the least living. And this is the reason why dead monotony is the sign of the spread of the Nation. The modern towns, which present the physiognomy due to this dominance of the Nation, are everywhere the same, from San Francisco to London, from London to Tokyo. They show no faces, but merely masks.

The peoples, being personalities, must have their self expression, and this leads to their distinctive creation. These creations are literature, art, social symbols and ceremonials. They are like different dishes at one common feast. They add richness to our enjoyment and understanding of truth. They are making the world of man fertile of life and variedly beautiful. .

But the nations do not create, they merely produce and destroy. Organisations for production are necessary. Even organisations for destruction may be so. But when, actuated by greed and hatred, they crowd away into a corner the living man who creates, then the harmony is lost, and the people's history runs at a break-neck speed towards some fatal catastrophe.

Humanity, where it is living, is guided by inner ideals; but where it is a dead organisation. it be comes impervious to them. Its building process is only an external process, and in its response to the moral guidance it has to pass through obstacles that are gross and non-plastic.

Man as a person has his individuality, which is the field where his spirit has its freedom to express itself and to grow. The professional man carries a rigid crust around him which has very little variation and hardly any elasticity. This professionalism is the region where men specialise their knowledge and organise their power, mercilessly elbowing each other in their struggle to come to the front. Professionalism is necessary, without doubt; but it must not be allowed to exceed its healthy limits, to assume complete mastery over the personal man., making him narrow and hard, exclusively intent upon pursuit of success at the cost of his faith in ideals.

In ancient India professions were kept within limits by social regulation. They were considered primarily as social necessities, and in the second place as the means of livelihood for individuals. Thus man, being free from the constant urging unbounded competition,, could have leisure to cultivate his nature in its completeness.

The Cult of the National is the professionalism of the people. This cult' is becoming their greatest danger, because it is bringing them enormous success, making them impatient of the claims of higher ideals. The grater the amount of success, the stronger are the conflicts of interest and jealousy and hatred which are aroused in men's minds, thereby making it more and more necessary for other peoples, who are still living, to stiffen into nations. With the growth of nationalism, man has become the greatest menace to man. Therefore the continual presence of panic goads that very nationalism into ever-increasing menace.

Crowd psychology is a blind force. Like steam and other physical forces, it can be utilized for creating a tremendous amount of power. And therefore rulers of men, who, out of greed and fear, are bent upon turning their peoples into machines of power, try to train this crowd psychology for their special purposes. They hold it to be their duty to foster in the popular mind universal panic, unreasoning pride in their own race, and hatred of others. Newspapers, school-books, and even religious services are made use of for this object; and those who have the courage to express their disapprobation of this blind and impious cult are either punished in the law-courts, or are socially ostracized. The individual thinks, even when he feels; but the same individual, where he feels with the crowd, does not reason at all. His moral sense becomes blurred. This suppression of higher humanity in crowd minds is productive of enormous strength. For the crowd mind is essentially primitive; its forces are elemental. Therefore the Nation is for ever watching to take advantage of this enormous power of darkness.

The people's instinct of self-preservation has been made dominant at particular times of crisis. Then, for the time being, the consciousness of its solidarity becomes aggressively wide-awake. But in the Nation this hyper-consciousness is kept alive for all time by artificial means. A man has to act the part of a policeman when he finds his house invaded by burglars. But if that remains his normal condition, then his consciousness of his household becomes acute and over-wrought, making him fly at every stranger passing near his house. This intensity of selfconsciousness is noting of which a man should feel proud; certainly it is not healthful. In like manner, incessant self-consciousness in a nation is highly injurious for the people. It serves its immediate purpose, but at the cost of the eternal in man.

When a whole body of men train themselves for a particular narrow purpose, it becomes a common interest with them to keep up that purpose and preach absolute loyalty to it. Nationalism is the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal; and when it gets hold of their minds it is sure to lead

them to moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness. We cannot but hold firm the faith that this Age of Nationalism, of gigantic vanity and selfishness, is only a passing phase in civilization, and those who are making permanent arrangements for accommodating this temporary mood of history will be unable to fit themselves for the coming age, when the true spirit of freedom will have sway.

. With the unchecked growth of Nationalism the moral foundation of man's civilisation is unconsciously undergoing a change. The ideal of the social man is unselfishness, but the ideal of the Nation, like that of the professional man, is, selfishness. This is why selfishness in the individual is condemned while in the nation it is extolled, which leads to hopeless moral blindness, confusing the religion of the people with the religion of the nation. Therefore, to take an example, we find men more and more convinced of the superior claims of Christianity, merely because Christian nations are in possession of the greater part of the world. It is like supporting a robber's religion by quoting the amount of his stolen property. Nations celebrate their successful massacre of men in their churches. They forget that Thugs also ascribed their success in manslaughter to the favour of their goddess. But in the case of the latter their goddess frankly represented the principle of destruction. It was the criminal tribe's own murderous instinct deified - the instinct, not of one individual, but of the whole community, and therefore held sacred.

In the same manner, in modern churches, selfishness, hatred and vanity in their collective aspect of national instincts do not scruple to share the homage paid to God.

Of course, pursuit of self-interest need not be wholly selfish; it can even be in harmony with the interest of all. Therefore, ideally speaking, the nationalism, which stands for the expression of the collective selfinterest of a people, need not be ashamed of itself it is maintains its true limitations. But what we see in practice is, that every nation which has prospered has done so through its career of aggressive selfishness either in commercial adventures or in foreign possessions, or in both. And this material prosperity not only feeds continually the selfish instincts of the people, but impresses men's minds with the lesson that, for a nation, selfishness is a necessity and therefore a virtue. It is the emphasis laid in Europe upon the idea of the Nation's constant increase of power, which is becoming the greatest danger to man, both in its direct activity and its power of infection.

We must admit that evils there are in human nature, in spite of our faith in moral laws and our training in self-control. But they carry on their foreheads their own brand of infamy, their very success adding to their monstrosity. All through man's history there will be some who suffer, and others' who cause suffering. The conquest of evil will never be a fully accomplished fact, but a continuous process like the process of burning in a flame.

In former ages, when some particular people became turbulent and tried to rob others of their human rights, they sometimes, achieved success and sometimes failed. And it amounted to nothing more than that. But when this idea of the Nation, which has met with universal acceptancein the present day, tries to pass off the cult of collective selfishness as a moral duty, simply because that selfishness is gigantic in stature, it not only commits depredation, but attacks the very vitals of humanity. It unconsciously generates in people's minds an attitude of defiance against moral law. For men are taught by repeated devices the lesson that the Nation is greater than the people, while yet it scatters to the wind the moral law that the people have held sacred.

It has been said that a disease becomes most acutely critical when the brain is affected. For it is the brain that is constantly directing the siege against all disease forces. The spirit of national selfishness is that brain disease of a people which shows itself in red eyes and clenched fists, in violence of talk and movements, all the while shattering its natural restorative powers. But the power of self-sacrifice, together with the moral faculty of sympathy and cooperation, is the guiding spirit of social vitality. Its function is to maintain a beneficent relation of harmony with its surroundings. But when it begins to ignore the moral law which is universal and uses it only within the bounds of its own narrow sphere, then its strength becomes like the strength of madness which ends in self-destruction.

What is worse, this aberration of a people, decked with the showy title of patriotism', proudly walks abroad, passing itself off as a highly moral influence. Thus it has spread its inflammatory contagion all over the world, proclaiming its fever flush to be the best sign of health. It is causing in the hearts of peoples, naturally inoffensive, a feeling of envy at not having their temperature as high as that of their delirious neighbours and not being able to cause as much mischief, but merely having to suffer from it.

I have often been asked by my Western friends how to cope with this evil, which has attained such sinister strength and vast dimensions. In fact, I have often been blamed for merely giving warning, and offering no alternative. When we suffer as a result of a particular system, we believe that some other system would bring us better luck. We are apt to forget that all systems produce evil sooner or later, when the psychology which is at the root of them is wrong. The system which is national today may assume the shape of the international tomorrow; but so long as men have not forsaken their idolatry of primitive instincts and collective passions, the new system will only become a new instrument of suffering. And because we are training to confound efficient system with moral goodness itself, every ruined system makes us more and more distrustful of moral law.

Therefore I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers. Like trees, they spread their roots in the soil and their branches in the sky, without consulting any architect for their plans.

Woman and Home

CREATIVE expressions attain their perfect form through motions modulated. Woman has that expression natural to her - a cadence of restraint in her behaviour, producing poetry of life. She has been an inspiration to man, guiding, most often unconsciously, his restless energy into an immense variety of creations in literature, art, music and religion. This is why, in India, woman has been described as the symbol of Shakti, the creative power.

But if woman begins to believe that, though biologically her function is different from that of man, psychologically she is identical with him; if the. human world in its mentality becomes exclusively male, then before long it will be reduced to utter inanity. For life finds its truth and beauty, not in any exaggeration of sameness, but in harmony.

If woman's nature were identical with man's, if Eve were a mere tautology of Adam, it would only give rise to a monotonous superfluity. But that she was not so was proved by the banishment she secured from a ready-made Paradise. She had the instinctive wisdom to realize that it was her mission to help her mate in creating Paradise of their own on earth, whose ideal she was to supply with her life, whose materials were to be produced and gathered by her comrade.

However, it is evident than an increasing number of women in the West are ready to assert that their difference from men is unimportant. The reason for the vehement utterance of such a paradox cannot be ignored. It is rebellion against a necessity, which is not equal for both the partners

Love in all forms has its obligations, and the love that binds women to their children binds them to their homes. But necessity is a tyrant, making us submit to injury and indignity, allowing advantage over us to those who are wholly or comparatively free from its burden. Such has been the case in the social relationship between man and woman. Along with the difference inherent in their respective natures, there have grown up between them inequalities fostered by circumstances. Man is not handicapped by the same biological and psychological responsibilities as woman, and therefore he has the liberty to give her the security of home. This liberty exacts payment when it offers its boon, because to give or to withhold the gift is within its power. It is the unequal freedom in their mutual relationships which has made the weight of life's tragedies so painfully heavy for woman to bear.

Some mitigation of her disadvantage has been effected by her rendering herself and her home a luxury to man. She has accentuated those qualities in herself which insidiously impose their bondage over her mate, some by pandering to his weakness, and some by satisfying his higher nature, till the sex-consciousness in our society has grown abnormal and overpowering. There is no actual objection to this in itself, for it offers a stimulus, acting in the depth of life, which leads to creative exuberance. But a great deal of it is a forced growth of compulsion bearing seeds of degradation. In those ages when men acknowledged spiritual perfection to be their object, women were denounced as the chief obstacle in their way. The constant and conscious exercise of allurements, which gave women their power, attacked the weak spots in man's nature, and doing so added to its weakness. For all relationships tainted with repression of freedom must become sources of degeneracy to the strong who impose such repression.

Balance of power, however, between man and woman was in a measure established when home wielded a strong enough attraction to make men accept its obligations. But at last the time has come when the material ambition of man has assumed such colossal proportions that home is in danger of losing its center of gravity for him, and he is receding farther and farther from its orbit.

The arid zone in the social life is spreading fast. The simple comforts of home, made precious by the touch of love, are giving way to luxuri that can only have their full extension in the isolation of self-centre life. Hotels are being erected on the ruins of homes; productions are growing more stupendous than creations; and most men have, for the materials of their happiness and recreation, their dogs and horses, their pipes, guns, and gambling clubs.

Reactions and rebellions, not being normal in their character, go on hurting truth until peace is restored. Therefore, when woman refuses to acknowledge the distinction between her life and that of man, she does not convince us of its truth, but only proves to its that she is suffering. All great suffering indicate some wrong somewhere. In the present case, the wrong is in woman's lack of freedom in her relationship with man, which compels her to turn her disabilities into attractions, and to use untruths as her allies in the battle of life, while she is suffering from the precariousness of her position.

From the beginning of our society, women have naturally accepted the training which imparts to their life-and to their home a spirit of harmony. It is their instinct to perform their services in such a manner that these, through beauty, might be raised from the domain of slavery to the realm of grace. Women have tried to prove that in the building up of social life they are artists and not artisans. But all expressions of beauty lose their truth when compelled to accept the patronage of the gross and the indifferent. Therefore when necessity drives women to fashion their lives to the taste of the insensitive or the sensual, then the whole thing becomes a tragedy of desecration. Society is full of such tragedies. Many of the laws and social regulations guiding the relationships of man and woman are relics of a barbaric age, when the brutal pride of an exclusive possession had its dominance in human relations, such as those of parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, teachers and disciples. The vulgarity of it still persists in the social bond between the sexes because of the economic helplessness of woman. Nothing makes us so stupidly mean as the sense of superiority which the power of the purse confers upon us.

The powers of muscle and of money have opportunities of immediate satisfaction, but the power of the ideal must have infinite patience. The man who sells his goods, or fulfils his contract, is cheated if he fails to realise payment, but he who gives form to some ideal may never get his due and be fully paid. What I have felt in the women of India is the consciousness of this ideal - their simple faith in the sanctity of devotion lighted by love which is held to be divine. True womanliness is regarded in our country as the saintliness of love. It is not merely praised there, but literally worshipped; and she who is gifted with it is called *Devi*, as one revealing in herself Woman, the Divine. That this has not been a mere metaphor to us is because, in India, our mind is familiar with the idea of God in an eternal feminine aspect. Thus the Eastern woman, who is deeply aware in her heart of the sacredness of her mission, is a constant education to man. It has to be admitted that there are chances of such an influence failing to penetrate the callousness of the coarse-minded; but that is the destiny of all manifestations whose value is not in success or reward in honour.

Woman has to be ready to suffer. She cannot allow her emotions to be dulled or polluted,- for these are to create her life's atmosphere, apart from which her world would be dark and dead. This leaves her heart without any protection of insensibility, at the mercy of the hurts and insults of life. Women of India, like women everywhere, have their share of suffering, but it radiates through the ideal, and becomes, like sunlight, a creative force in their world. Our women know by heart the legends of the great women of the epic age - Savitri who by the power of love conquered death and Sita who had no other reward for her life of sacrifice but the sacred majesty of sorrow. They know that it is their duty to make this life an image of the life eternal, and that love's mission truly performed has a spiritual meaning. It is a religious responsibility for them to live the life which is their own. For their activity is not for money-making, or organising power, or intellectually probing the mystery of existence, but for establishing and maintaining human relationships requiring the highest moral qualities. It is the consciousness of the spiritual character of their life's work, which lifts them above the utilitarian standard of the immediate and the passing, surrounds them with the dignity of the eternal, and transmutes their suffering and sorrow into a crown of light

I must guard myself from the risk of a possible misunderstanding. The permanent significance of home is not in the narrowness of its enclosure, but in an eternal moral idea. It represents the truth of human relationship; it reveals loyalty and love for the personality of man. Let us take a wider view, in a perspective truer than can be found in its present conventional associations. With the discovery and development of agriculture there came a period of settled life in our history. The nomad ever moved on with his tents and cattle; he explored space and exploited its contents. The cultivator of land explored time in its immensity, for he had leisure. Comparatively secured from the uncertainty of his outer resources, he had the opportunity to deal with his moral resources in the realm of human truth. This is why agricultural civilisation, like that of India and China, is essentially a civilisation of human relationship, of the adjustment of mutual obligations. It is deep-rooted in the inner life of man. Its basis is co-operation and not competition. In other words, its principle is the principle of home, to which all its outer adventures are subordinated.

In the meanwhile, the nomadic life with its predatory instinct of exploitation has developed into a great civilisation. It is immensely proud and strong, killing leisure and pursuing opportunities. It minimises the claims of personal relationship and is jealously careful of its unhampered freedom for acquiring wealth and asserting its will upon others. Its burden is the burden of things, which grows heavier and more complex every day, disregarding the human and the spiritual. Its powerful pressure from all sides narrows the limits of home, the personal region of the human world. Thus, in this region of life, women are every day hustled out of their shelter for want of accommodation.

But such as state of things can never have the effect of changing woman into man. On the contrary, it will lead her to find her place in the unlimited range of society, and the Guardian Spirit of the personal in human nature will extend the ministry of woman over all developments of life. Habituated to deal with the world as machine, man is multiplying his materials, banishing away his happiness and sacrificing love to comfort, which is an illusion. At last the present age has sent its cry to women, asking her to come out from her segregation in order to restore the spiritual supremacy of all that is human in the world of humanity. She has been aroused to remember that womanliness is not chiefly decorative. It is like that vital health, which not only imparts the bloom of beauty to the body, but joy to the mind and perfection to life.

An Eastern University

IN the midst of much that is discouraging in the present state of the world, there is one symptom of vital promise. Asia is awakening. This great event, if it be but directed along the right lines, is full of hope, not only for Asia herself, but for the whole world.

On the other hand, it has to be admitted that the relationship of the West with the East, growing more and more complex and widespread for over two centuries, far from attaining its true fulfillment, has given rise to a universal spirit of conflict. The consequent strain and unrest have profoundly disturbed Asia, and antipathetic forces have been accumulating for years in the depth of the Eastern mind.

The meeting of the East and the West has remained incomplete, because the occasions of it have not been disinterested. The political and commercial adventures carried on by Western races - very often by force and against the interest and wishes of the countries they have dealt with - have created a moral alienation, which is deeply injurious to both parties. The perils threatened by this unnatural relationship have long been contemptuously ignored by the West. But the blind confidence of the strong in their apparent invincibility has often, led them, from their dream of security, into terrible surprises of history.

It is not the fear of danger or loss to one people or another, however, which is most important. The demoralising influence of the constant estrangement between the two hemispheres, which affects the baser passions of man, - pride, greed and hypocrisy on the one hand; fear, suspiciousness and flattery on the other, - has been developing, and threatens us with a world-vide spiritual disaster.

The time has come when we must use all our wisdom to understand the situation, and to control it, with a stronger trust in moral guidance than. in any array of physical forces.

In the beginning of man's history his first social object was to form a community, to grow into a people. At that early period, individuals were gathered together within geographical enclosures. But in the present age, with its facility of communication, geographical barriers have almost lost their reality, and the great federation of men, which is waiting either to.find its true scope or to break asunder in a final catastrophe, is not a meeting of individuals, but of various human races. Now the problem before us is of one single country, which is this earth, where the races as individuals must find both their freedom of self-expression and their bond of federation. Mankind must realise a unity, wider in range, deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever before. Now that the problem is large, we have to solve it on a bigger scale, to realise the God in man by a larger faith and to build the temple of our faith on a sure and world-wide basis.

The first step towards realisation is to create opportunities for revealing the different peoples to one another. This can never be done in those fields where the exploiting utilitarian spirit is supreme. We must find some meeting-ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University, where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage, and realise that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind. When the science of meteorology knows the earth's atmosphere as continuously one, affecting the different parts of the world differently, but in a harmony of adjustments, it knows and attains truth. And so, too, we must know that the great mind of man is one, working through the many differences which are needed to ensure the full result of its fundamental unity. When we understand this truth in a disinterested spirit, it teaches us to respect all the differences in man that are real, yet remain conscious of our oneness; and to know that perfection of unity is not in uniformity, but in harmony.

This is the problem of the present age. The East, for its own sake and for the sake. of the world, must not remain unrevealed. The. deepest source of all calamities in history is misunderstanding. For where we do not understand, we can never be just.

Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual to-day must realise according to his power, I have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This Institution, according to the plan I have in mind, will invite students from the West to study the different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in this task.

India has her renaissance. She is preparing to make her contribution to the world of the future. In the past she produced her great culture, and in the present age she has an equally important contribution to make to the culture of the New World which is emerging from the, wreckage of the Old. This is a momentous period of her history pregnant with precious possibilities, when any disinterested offer of co-operation from any part of the West will have an immense moral value, the memory of which will become brighter as the regeneration of the East grows in vigour and creative power.

The Western Universities give their students an opportunity to learn what all the European peoples have contributed to their Western culture. Thus the intellectual mind of the West has been luminously revealed to the world. What is needed to complete this illumination is for the East to collect its own scattered lamps and offer them to the enlightenment of the world.

There was a time when the great countries of Asia had, each of them, to nurture its own civilisation apart in

comparative seclusion. Now has come the age of coordination and co-operation. The seedlings that were reared within narrow plots must now be transplanted into the open fields. They must pass the test of the world-market, if their maximum value is to be obtained:

But before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure out a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When, taking her stand on such a culture; she turns toward the West, she will take, with a confident sense of mental freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage-ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. Otherwise, she will allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust. and, trying to replace it clumsily with feeble imitations of the West, make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous. If she thus loses her individuality and her specific power to exist, will it in the least help the rest of the world? Will not her terrible bankruptcy involve also the Western mind? If the whole world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity.

In this belief, it is my desire to extend by degrees the scope of this University en simple lines, until it comprehends the whole range of Eastern cultures- the Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian and others. Its object will be to reveal the Eastern mind to the world.

Of one thing I felt certain during my travels in Europe, that a genuine interest has been roused there in the philosophy and the arts of the East, from which the Western mind seeks fresh inspiration of truth and beauty: Once the East had her reputation of fabulous wealth, and the seekers were attracted from across the sea. Since then, the shrine of wealth has changed its site. But the East is famed also for her storage of wisdom, harvested by her patriarchs from long successive ages of spiritual endeavour. And when, as now, in the midst of the pursuit of power and wealth, there rises the cry of privation from the famished spirit of man, an opportunity is offered to the East, to offer her store to those who need it.

Once upon a time we were in possession of such a thing as our own mind in India. It was living. It thought, it felt, it expressed itself. It was receptive as well as productive. That this mind could be of any use in the process, or in the end, or our education was overlooked by our modern educational dispensation. We are provided with buildings and books and other magnificent burdens calculated to suppress our mind. The latter was treated like a library-shelf solidly made of wood, to be loaded with leather-bound volumes of second-hand information. In consequence, it has lost its own colour and characters, and has borrowed polish from the carpenter's shop. All this has cost us money, and also our finer ideas, while our intellectual vacancy has been crammed with what is described in official reports as Education. In fact, we have bought our spectacles at the expense of our eyesight.

In India our goddess of learning is Saraswati. My audience in the West, I am sure, will be glad to know that her complexion is white. But the signal fact is that she is living and she is a woman, and her seat is on a lotus-flower. The symbolic meaning of this is, that she dwells in the centre of life and the heart of all existence, which opens itself in beauty to the light of heaven.

The Western education which we have chanced to know is impersonal. Its complexion is also white, but it is the whiteness of the white-washed classroom walls. It dwells in the cold-storage compartments of lessons and the ice-packed minds of the schoolmasters. The effect which it had on my mind when, as a boy, I was compelled to go to school, I have described elsewhere. My feeling was very much the same as a tree might have, which was not allowed to live its full life, but was cut down to be made into packing-cases.

The introduction of this education was not a part of the solemn marriage. ceremony which was to unite the minds of the East and West in mutual understanding. It represented an artificial method of training specially calculated to produce the carriers of the white man's burden. This want of ideals still clings to our education system, though our Universities have latterly burdened their syllabus with a greater number of subjects than before. But it is only like adding to the bags of wheat the bullock carries to market; ii does not make the bullock any better off.

Mind, when long deprived of it natural food of truth and freedom of growth, develops an unnatural craving for success; and our students have fallen victims to the mania for success in examinations. Success consists in obtaining the largest number of marks with the strictest economy of knowledge. It is a deliberate cultivation of disloyalty to truth, of intellectual dishonesty, of a foolish imposition by which the mind is encouraged to rob itself. But as we are by means of it made to forget the existence of mind, we are supremely happy at the result. We pass examinations, and shrivel up into clerks, lawyers and police inspectors, and we die young.

Universities should never be made into mechanical organisations for collecting and distributing knowledge. Through them the people should offer their intellectual hospitality, their wealth of mind to others, and earn their proud right in return to receive gifts from the rest of the world. But in the whole length and breadth of India there is not a single University established in the modern time where a foreign or an Indian student can properly be acquainted with the best products of the Indian mind. For that we have to cross the sea, and knock at the doors of France and Germany. Educational institutions in our country are India's almsbowl of knowledge; they lower our intellectual self-respect; they encourage us to make a foolish display of decorations composed of borrowed feathers.

This it was that led me to found a school in Bengal, in face of many difficulties and discouragements, and in spite of my own vocation as a poet, who finds this true inspiration only when he forgets that he is a schoolmaster. It is my hope that in this school a nucleus has been formed, round which an indigenous University of our own land will find its natural

growth - a University which will help India's mind to concentrate and to be fully conscious of itself; free to seek the truth and make this truth its own wherever found, to judge by its own standard, give expression to its own creative genius, and offer its wisdom to the. guests who come from other parts of the world.

Man's intellect has a natural pride in is own aristocracy, which is the pride of its culture. Culture only acknowledges the excellence whose criticism is in its inner perfection, not in any external success. When this pride succumbs :o some compulsion of necessity or lure of material advantage, it brings humiliation to the intellectual man. Modern India, through her very education, has been made to suffer this humiliation. Once she herself provided her children with a culture which was the product of her own ages of thought and creation. But it has been thrust aside, and we are made to tread the mill of passing examinations, not for learning anything, but for notifying that we are qualified for employments under organisations conducted in English. Our educated community is not a cultured community, but a community of qualified candidates. Meanwhile the proportion of possible employments to the number of claimants has gradually been growing narrower, and the consequent disaffection has been widespread. At last the very authorities who are responsible for this are blaming their victims. Such is the perversity of human nature. It bears its worst grudge against those it has injured.

It is as if some tribe which had the primitive habit of decorating its tribal members with birds' plumages were some day to hold these very birds guilty of the crime of being extinct. There are belated attempts on the part of our governors to read us pious homilies about disinterested love of learning, while the old machinery goes on working, whose product is not education but certificates. It is good to remind the lettered bird that its wings are for soaring; but it is better to, cut the chain which is holding it to its perch. The most pathetic feature of the tragedy is that the bird itself has learnt to use its chain for its ornament neat, simply because the chain jingles in fairly respectable English.

In the Bengali language there is a modern maxim which can be translated, 'He who learns to read and write rides in a carriage and pair.' In English there is a similar proverb, 'Knowledge is power.' It is an offer of a prospective bribe to the student, a promise of an ulterior reward which is more important than knowledge itself. Temptations, held before us as inducements to be good or to pursue uncongenial paths, are most often flimsy lies or half-truths, such as the oft-quoted maxim of respectable piety, 'Honesty is the. best policy,' at which politicians all over the world seem to laugh in their sleeves. But unfortunately, education conducted under a special providence of purposefulness, of eating the fruit of knowledge from the wrong end, does lead one to that special paradise on earth, the daily rides in one's own carriage and pair. And the West, I have heard from authentic sources, is aspiring in its education after that special cultivation of worldliness.

Where society is comparatively simple and obstructions are not too numerous, we car, clearly see how the life-process guides education in its vital purpose. The system of folk-education, which is indigenous to India, but is dying out, was one with the people's life. It flowed naturally through the social channels and made its way everywhere. It is a system of widespread irrigation of culture. Its teachers, specially trained men, are in constant requisition, and find crowded meetings in our villages, where they repeat the best thoughts and express the ideals of the laid in the most effective form. The mode of instruction includes the recitation of epics, expounding of the scriptures, reading from the Puranas, which ace the classical records of old history, performance of pays founded upon the early myths and legends, dramatic narration of the lives of ancient heroes; and the singing in chorus of songs from the old religious literature. Evidently, according to this system, the best function of education is to enable its to realise that to live as a man is great, requiring profound philosophy for its ideal, poetry for its expression, and heroism in its conduct Owing to this vital method of culture the common people of India, though technically illiterate, have been made conscious of the sanctity of social relationships, entailing constant sacrifice and self- urged and supported by ideals collectively expressed in one word, *Dharma*

Such a system of education my sound too simple for the complexities of modern life. But the fundamental principle of social life in its different stages of development remains the same; and in no circumstance can the truth be ignored that all human complexities must harmonise in organic unity with life, failing which there will be endless conflict. Most things in the civilised world occupy more than their legitimate space. Much of their burden is needless. By bearing this burden civilised man may be showing great strength, but he displays little skill. To the gods, viewing this from on high, it must seem like the flounderings of a giant who has got out of his depth and knows not how to swim.

The main source of all forms of voluntary slavery is the desire of gain. It is difficult to fight against this when modern civilisation is tainted with such a universal contamination of avarice. I have realised it myself in the little boys of my own school. For the first few years there is no trouble. But as soon as the upper class is reached, their worldly wisdom - the malady of the aged - begins to assert itself. They rebelliously insist that they must no longer learn, but rather pass examinations. Professions in the modern age are more numerous and lucrative than ever before. They need specialisation of training and knowledge, tempting education to yield its spiritual freedom to the claims of utilitarian ambitions. But man's deeper nature is hurts his smothered life seeks to be liberated from the suffocating folds and sensual ties of prosperity. And this is why we find almost everywhere in the world a growing dissatisfaction with the prevalent system of teaching, which betrays the encroachment of senility and worldly prudence over pure intellect.'

In India, also, a vague feeling of discontent has given rise to numerous attempts at establishing national schools

and colleges, but, unfortunately,. our very education has been successful in depriving us of our real initiative and our courage of thought. The training we get in our schools has the constant implication in it that it is not for us to produce but to borrow. And we are casting about to borrow our educational plans from European institutions. The trampled plants of Indian corn are dreaming of recouping their harvest from the neighbouring wheat fields. To change the figure, we forget that, for proficiency in walking, it is better to train the muscles of our own legs than to strut upon wooden ones of foreign make, although they clatter and cause more surprise at our skill in using them than if they were living and real.

But when we go to borrow help from a foreign neighbourhood we are apt to overlook the real source of help behind all that is external and apparent. Had the deep-water fishes happened to produce a scientist who chose the jumping of a monkey for his research work, I am sure he would give most of the credit to the branches of the trees and very little to the monkey itself. In a foreign University we see the branching wildernesses of its buildings, furniture, regulations, and syllabus, but the monkey, which is a difficult creature to catch and more difficult to manufacture, we are likely to treat as a mere accident of minor importance. It is convenient for us to overlook the fact that among the Europeans the living spirit of the University is widely spread in their society, their parliament, their literature, and the numerous activities of their corporate life. In all these functions they are in perpetual touch with the great personality of the land which is creative and heroic in its constant acts of self-expression and self-sacrifice. They have their thoughts published in their books as well as through the medium of living men who think those thoughts, and who criticise, compare and disseminate them. Some at least of the drawbacks of their academic education are redeemed by the living energy of the intellectual personality pervading their social organism. it is like the stagnant reservoir of water which finds its purification in the showers of rain to which it keeps itself open. But, to our misfortune, we have in India all the furniture of the European University except the human teacher. We have, instead, mere purveyors of book-lore in whom the paper god of the bookshop has been made vocal.

A most important truth, which we are apt to forget, is that a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own dame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, call only load their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but inspire. If the inspiration dies out, and the information only accumulates, then truth loses its infinity. The greater part of our learning in the schools has been wasted because, for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things, with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love.

The educational institution, therefore, which I have in mind has primarily for its object the constant pursuit of truth, from which the imparting of truth naturally follows. It must not be a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food artificially prepared. It should be an open house, in which students and teachers are at one. They must live their complete life together, dominated by a common aspiration for truth arid a need of sharing all the delights of culture. In former days the great master-craftsmen had students in their workshops where they *co*operated in shaping things to perfection. That was the place where knowledge could become living - that knowledge which not only has its substance and law, but its atmosphere subtly informed by a creative art, in which the man who explores truth expresses something which is human in him - his enthusiasm, his courage, his sacrifice, his honesty, and his skill. In merely academical teaching we find subjects, but not the man who pursues the subjects; therefore the vital part of education remains incomplete.

For our Universities we must claim, not labelled packages of truth and authorised agents to distribute them, but truth in its living association with her lovers and seekers and discoverers. Also we must know that the concentration of the mind-forces scattered throughout the country is the most important mission of a University, which, like the nucleus of a living cell, should be the centre of the intellectual life of the people.

The bringing about of an intellectual unity in India is, I am told, difficult to the verge of impossibility owing to the fact that India has so many different languages. Such a statement is as unreasonable as to say that man, because he has a diversity of limbs, should find it impossible to realise life's unity in himself, and that only an earthworm composed of a tail and nothing else could truly know that it had a body.

Let its admit that India is not like any one of the great countries of Europe, which has its own separate language; but is rather like Europe herself, branching out into different peoples with many different languages. And yet Europe has a common civilisation, with an intellectual unity which is not based upon uniformity of language. It is true that in the earlier stages of her culture the whole of Europe had Latin for her learned tongue. That was in her intellectual budding tune, when all her petals of self-expression were closed in one point. But the perfection of her mental unfolding was not represented by the singularity of her literary vehicle. When the grate European countries found their individual languages, then only the true federation of cultures became possible in the West, and the very differences of the channels made the commerce of ideas in Europe so richly copious and so variedly active.. We can well imagine what the loss to European civilisation would be if France, Italy and Germany, and England herself, had not through their separate agencies contributed to the common coffer their individual earnings.

There was a time with us when India had her common language of culture in Sanskrit. But, for the complete commerce of her thought, she required that all her vernaculars should attain their perfect powers, through which her different peoples

might manifest their idiosyncrasies; and this could never be done through a foreign tongue.

In the United States, in Canada and other British Colonies, the language of the people is English. It has a great literature which had its birth and growth in the history of the British islands. But when this language, with all its products and acquisitions, matured by ages on its own mother soil, is carried into foreign lands, which have their own separate history and their own life-growth, it must constantly hamper the indigenous growth of culture and destroy individuality of judgement and the perfect freedom of self-expression. The inherited wealth of the English language, with all its splendour, becomes an impediment when taken into different surroundings, just as when lungs are given to the whale in the sea. If such is the case even with races whose grandmother- naturally continues to be their own mother-tongue, one can imagine what sterility it means for a people which accepts, for its vehicle of culture, an altogether foreign language. A language is not like an umbrella or an overcoat, that can be borrowed by unconscious or deliberate mistake; it is like the living skin itself. If the body of a draughthorse enters into the skin of a race-horse, it will be safe to wager that such an anomaly will never win a race, and will fail even to drag a cart. Have we not watched some modern Japanese artists imitating European art? The imitation may sometimes produce clever results; but such cleverness has only the perfection of artificial flowers which never bear fruit.

All great countries have their vital centres for intellectual life, where a high standard of learning is maintained, where the minds of the people are naturally attracted, where they find their genial atmosphere, in which to prove their worth and to contribute their share to the country's culture. Thus they kindle, on the common altar of the land, that great sacrificial fire which can radiate the sacred light of wisdom abroad. '

Athens was such a centre in Greece, Rome in Italy; and Paris is such today in France. Benares has been and still continues to be the centre of our Sanskrit culture. But Sanskrit learning does not exhaust all the elements of culture that exist in modern India.

If we were to take for granted, what some people maintain, that Western culture is the only source of light for our mind, then it would be like depending for daybreak upon some star, which is the sun of a far distant sphere. The star may give us light, but not the day; it may give us direction in our voyage of exploration, but it can never open the full view of truth before our eyes. In fact, we can never use this cold starlight for stirring the sap in our branches, and giving colour and bloom to our life. This is the reason why European education has become for India mere school lessons and no culture; a box of matches, good for the small uses of illumination, but not the light of morning, in which the use and beauty, and all the subtle mysteries of life are blended in one.

Let me say clearly that I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On, the contrary, believe that the shock of such extraneous forces is necessary for the vitality of our intellectual nature. It is admitted that much of the spirit of Christianity runs counter, not only to the classical culture of Europe, but to the European temperament altogether. And yet this alien movement of ideas, constantly running against the natural mental current of Europe, has been a most important factor in strengthening and enriching her civilisation, on account of the sharp antagonism of its intellectual direction. In I fact, the European vernaculars first woke up to life and fruitful vigour when they felt the impact of this foreign thought-power with all its oriental forms and affinities. The same thing is happening in India. The European culture has come to us, not only with its knowledge, but with its velocity.

Then, again, let us admit that modern Science is Europe's great gift to humanity for all time to come. We, in India, must claim it from her hands, and gratefully accept it in order to be saved from the curse of futility by lagging behind. We shall fail to reap the harvest of the present age if we delay.

What I object to is the artificial arrangement by which foreign education tends to occupy all the space of out national mind, and thus kills, or hampers, the great opportunity for the creation of a new thoughtpower by a new combination of truths. It is this which makes me urge that all the elements in our own culture have to be strengthened, not to resist the Western culture, but truly to accept and assimilate it; to use it for our sustenance, not as our burden; to get mastery over this culture, and not to live on its outskirts as the hewers of texts and drawers of book-learning.

The main river in Indian culture has flowed in four streams, - the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, and the Jain. It has its source in the heights of the Indian consciousness. But a river, belonging to a country, is not fed by its own waters alone. The Tibetan Brahmaputra is a tributary to the Indian Ganges. Contributions have similarly found their way to India's original culture. The Muhammadan, for example, has repeatedly come into India's original culture. The Muhammadan, for example., has repeatedly come into India from outside, laden with his own stores of knowledge and feeling and his wonderful religious democracy, bringing freshet after freshet to swell the current. To our music, our architecture, our pictorial art, our literature, the Muhammadans have made their permanent and precious contribution. Those who have studied the lives and writings of our medieval saints, and all the great religious movements that sprang up in the time of the Muhammadan rule, know how deep is our debt to this foreign current that has so intimately mingled with our life.

So, in our centre of Indian learning, we must provide for the coordinate study of all these different cultures, - the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zoroastrian. The Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan will also have to be added; for, in the past, India did not remain isolated within her own boundaries. Therefore, in, order to learn what she was, in her relation to the whole continent of Asia, these cultures too must be studied. Side

by side with them must finally be placed the Western culture. For only then shall we be able to assimilate this last contribution to our common stock. A river flowing within banks is truly our own, and it can contain its due tributaries; but our relations with a flood can only prove disastrous.

There are some who are exclusively modern, who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts. They refuse to believe that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons that the great ages of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past.

The unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past have lost their present age. They have missed their seed for cultivation, and go begging for their bare livelihood. We must not imagine that we are one of these disinherited peoples of the world. The time has come for us to break open the treasure-trove of our ancestors, and use it for our commerce of life. Let us, with its help, make our future our own, and not continue our existence as the eternal rag-pickers in other people's dustbins.

So far I have dwelt only upon the intellectual aspect of Education. For, even in the West, it is the intellectual training which receives almost exclusive emphasis. The Western universities have not yet truly recognized that fulness of life. And a large part of man can never find its expression in the mere language of words. It must therefore seek for its other languages, - lines and colours, sounds and movementsThrough our mastery of these we not only make our whole nature articulate, but also understand man in all his attempts to reveal his innermost being in every age and clime. The great use of Education is not merely to collect facts, but to know man and to make oneself known to man. It is the duty of every human being to master, at least to some extent, not only the language of intellect, but also that personality which is the language of Art. It is a great world of reality for man, - vast and profound, - this growing world of his own creative nature. This is the world of Art. To be brought up in ignorance of it is to be deprived of the knowledge and use of that great inheritance of humanity, which has been growing and waiting for every one of us from the beginning of our history. It is to remain deaf to the eternal voice of Man, that speaks to all men the messages that are beyond speech. From the educational point of view we know Europe where it is scientific, or at best literary. So our notion of its modern culture is limited within the boundary lines of grammar and the laboratory. We almost completely ignore the aesthetic life of man, leaving it uncultivated, allowing weeds to grow there. Our newspapers are prolific, our meeting-places are vociferous; and in them we wear to shreds the things we have borrowed from our English teachers. We make the air dismal and damp with the tears of our grievances. But where are our arts, which, like the outbreak of spring flowers, are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual magnificence?

Through this great deficiency of our modern education, we are condemned to carry to the end a dead load of dumb wisdom. Like miserable outcasts, we are deprived of our place in the festival of culture, and wait at the outer court, where the colours are not for us, nor the forms of delight, nor the songs. Ours is the education of a prison-house, with hard labour and with a drab dress cut to the limits of minimum decency and necessity. We are made to forget that the perfection of colour and form and expression belongs to the perfection of vitality, that the joy of life is only the other side of the strength of life. The timber merchant may think that the flowers and foliage are mere frivolous decorations of a tree; but if these are suppressed, he will know to his cost that the timber too will fail.

During the Moghal period, music and art in India found a great impetus from the rulers, because their whole life - not merely their official life - was lived in this land; and it is the wholeness of life from which originates Art. But our English teachers are birds of passage; they cackle to us, but do not sing, - their true heart is not in the land of their exile.

Construction of life, owing to this narrowness of culture, must no longer be encouraged. In the centre of Indian culture which I am proposing, music and art must have their prominent seats of Honour, and not be given merely a tolerant nod of recognition. The different systems of music and different schools of art which lie scattered in the different ages and provinces of India, and in the different strata of society, and also those belonging to the other great countries of Asia, which had communication with India, have to be brought there together and studied.

I have already hinted that Education should not be dragged out of its native element, the life-current of the people. Economic life covers the whole width of the fundamental basis of society, because its necessities are the simplest and the most universal. Educational institutions, in order to obtain their fulness of truth, must have close association with this economic life. The highest mission of education is to help us to realise the inner principle of the unity of all knowledge and all the activities of our social and spiritual being. Society in its early stage was held together by its economic cooperation, when all its members felt in unison a natural interest in their right to live. Civilisation could never been started at all if such was not the case. And civilisation will fall to pieces if it never again realises the spirit of mutual help and the common sharing of benefits in the elemental necessaries of life. The idea of such economic co-operation .should be made the basis of our University. It must not only instruct, but live; not only think, but produce.

Our ancient *tapovanas*, or forest schools, which were our natural universities, were not shut off from the daily life of the people. Masters and students gathered fruit and fuel, and took their cattle out to graze, supporting themselves by the work of their own hands. Spiritual education was a part of the spiritual life itself, which comprehended all life. Out centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life also. I must co-

operate with the villages round it, cultivate land, breed cattle, spin cloths, press oil from oil from oil-seeds; it must produce all the necessaries, devising the best means, using the best materials, and calling science to its aid. Its very existence should depend upon the success of its industrial activities carried out on the co-operative principle, which will unite the teachers and students and villagers of the neighbourhood in a living and active bond of necessity. This will give us also a practical industrial training, whose motive force is not the greed of profit.

Before I conclude my paper, a. delicate question remains to be considered. What must be the religious ideal that is to rule our centre of Indian culture? The one abiding ideal in the religious life of India has been *mukti,* the deliverance of man's soul from the grip of self, its communion with the Infinite Soul through its union in *ananda* with the universe. This religion. of spiritual harmony is not a theological doctrine to be taught, as a subject in the class, for half an hour each day. It is the spiritual truth and beauty of our attitude towards our surroundings, our conscious relationship with the infinite, and the lasting power of the Eternal in the passing moments of our life. Such a religious ideal car, only be made possible by making provision for students to live in intimate touch with nature, daily to grow in an atmosphere of service offered to all creatures, tending trees, feeding birds and animals, learning to feel the immense mystery of the soil and mater and air.

Along with this, there should be some common sharing of life with the tillers of the soil and the humble workers in the neighbouring villages; studying their crafts, inviting them to the feasts, joining them in works of co-operation for communal welfare; and in our intercourse we should be guided, not by moral maxims or the condescension of social superiority, but by natural sympathy of life for life, and by the sheer necessity of love's sacrifice for its own sake. In such all atmosphere students would learn to understand that humanity is a divine harp of many strings, waiting for its one grand music. Those who realise this unity are made ready for the pilgrimage through the night of suffering, and along the path of sacrifice, to the great meeting of Man in the future, for which the call comes to us across the darkness.

Life, in such a centre, should be simple and clean. We should never believe that simplicity of life might make us unsuited to the requirements of the society of our time. It is the simplicity of the tuning-fork, which is needed all the more because of the intricacy of strings in the instrument in the morning of our career our nature needs the pure and the perfect note of a spiritual ideal in order to fit us for the complications of our later years.

In other words, this institution should be a perpetual creation by the co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self-sustaining, independent, rich with ever-renewing life radiating life across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies. Its aim should lie in imparting life-breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection.

13

The Gardener

13

The Gardener

1

SERVANT : Have mercy upon your servant, my queen!

QUEEN : The assembly is over and my servants are all gone. Why do you come at this late hour?

SERVANT : When you have finished with others, that is my time.

I come to ask what remains for your last servant to do.

QUEEN : What can you expect when it is too late?

SERVANT : Make me the gardener of your flower garden.

QUEEN : What folly is this?

SERVANT : I will give up my other work.

I throw my swords and lances down in the dust. Do not send me to distant courts; do not bid me undertake new conquests. But make me the gardener of your flower garden

QUEEN : What will your duties be?

SERVANT : The service of your idle days. I will keep fresh the grassy path where you walk in the morning, where your feet will be greeted with praise at every step by the flowers eager for death.

I will swing you in a swing among the branches of the *saptaparna*, where the early evening moon will struggle to kiss your skirt through the leaves.

I will replenish with scented oil the lamp that burns by your bedside, and decorate your footstool with sandal and saffron paste in wondrous designs.

QUEEN : What will you have for your reward?

SERVANT : To be allowed to hold your little fists like tender lotus-buds and slip flower chains over your wrists; to tinge the soles of your feet with the red juice of *ashoka* petals and kiss away the speck of dust that may chance to linger there.

QUEEN : Your prayers are granted, my servant, you will be the gardener of my flower garden.

2

'AH, POET, the evening draws near; your hair is turning grey.'

'Do you in your lonely musing hear the message of the hereafter?'

'It is evening,' the poet said, 'and I am listening because some one may call from the village, late though it be.

'I watch if young straying hearts meet together, and two pairs of eager eyes beg for music to break their silence and speak for them.

'Who is there to weave their passionate songs, if I sit on the shore of life and contemplate death and the beyond?

'The early evening star disappears.

"The glow of a funeral pyre slowly dies by the silent river.

'Jackals cry in chorus from the courtyard of the deserted house in the light of the worn-out moon.

'If some wanderer, leaving home, come here to watch the night and with bowed head listen to the murmur of the darkness, who is there to whisper the secrets of life into his ears if I, shutting my doors, should try to free myself from mortal bonds?

'It is a trifle that my hair is turning grey.

'I am ever as young or as old as the youngest and the oldest of this village.

'Some have smiles, sweet and simple, and some a sly twinkle in their eyes.

'Some have tears that well up in the daylight, and others tears that are hidden in the gloom.

'They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the afterlife.

'I am of am age with each, what matter if my hair turns grey?'

3

IN THE morning I cast my net into the sea. I dragged up from the dark abyss things, of strange aspect and strange beauty-some shone like a smile, some glistened like tears, and some were flushed like the cheeks of a bride.

When with the day's burden I went home, my love was sitting in the garden idly tearing the leaves of a flower.

I hesitated for a moment, and then placed at her feet all that I had dragged up, and stood silent.

She glanced at them and said, 'What strange things are these? I know not of what use they are!'

I bowed my head in shame and thought, 'I have not fought for these, I did not buy them in the market; they are not fit gifts for her.'

Then the whole night through I flung them one by one into the street.

In the morning travellers came; they picked them up and carried them into far countries.

4

AH ME, why did they build my house by the road to the market town?

They moor their laden boats near my trees.

They come and go and wander at their will.

I sit and watch them; my time wears on.

Turn them away I cannot. And thus my days pass by.

Night and day their steps sound by my door. Vainly I cry, 'I do not know you.'

Some of them are known to my fingers, some to my nostrils, the blood in my veins seems to know them, and some are known to my dreams.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say,

'Come to my house whoever chooses. Yes, come.'

In the morning the bell rings in the temple.

They come with their baskets in their hands.

Their feet are rosy red. The early light of dawn is on their faces.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and I say,

'Come to my garden to gather flowers. Come hither.'

In the mid-day the gong sounds at the palace gate.

I know not why they leave their work and linger near my hedge.

The flowers in their hair are pale and faded; the notes are languid in their flutes.

Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say,

'The shade is cool under my trees. Come, friends.'

At night the crickets chirp in the woods.

Who is it that comes slowly to my door and gently knocks?

I vaguely see the face, not a word is spoken, the stillness of the sky is all around.

Turn away my silent guest I cannot. I look at the face through the dark, and hours of dreams pass by.

5

I AM restless. I am a thirst for faraway things.

My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.

O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!

I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land. Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.

Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own. O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute! I forget, I ever forget, that I know not the way, that I have not the winged horse.

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my heart. In the sunny haze of the languid hours, what vast vision of thine takes shape in the blue of the sky!

O Farthest end, O the keen call of thy flute!

I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut everywhere in the house where I dwell alone!

6

THE tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest.

They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.

The free bird cries, 'O my love, let us fly to the wood.'

The cage bird whispers, 'Come hither, let us both live in the cage.'

Says the free bird, 'Among bars, where is there room to spread one's wings?'

'Alas,' cries the cage bird, 'I should not know where to sit perched in the sky.' .

The free bird cries, 'My darling, sing the songs of the woodlands.'

The cage bird says, 'Sit by my side, I'll teach you the speech of the learned.'

The forest bird cries, 'No, ah no! songs can never be taught.'

The cage bird says, 'Alas for me, I know not the songs of the woodlands.'

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.

Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other.

They flutter their wings in yearning, and sing, 'Come closer, my love!'

The free bird cries, 'It cannot be, I fear the closed doors of the cage.'

The cage bird whispers. 'Alas, my wings are powerless and dead.'

7

O MOTHER, the young Prince is to pass by our door; how can I attend to my work this morning?

Show me how to braid up my hair; tell me what garment to put on.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother?

I know well he will not glance up once at my window; I know he will pass out of my sight in the twinkling of an eye; only the vanishing strain of the flute will come sobbing to me from afar.

But the young Prince will pass by our door, and I will put on my best for the moment.

O mother, the young Prince did pass by our door, and the morning sun flashed from his chariot.

I swept aside the veil from my face, I tore the ruby chain from my neck and flung it in his path.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother?

I know well he did not pick up my chain; I know it was crushed under his wheels leaving a red stain upon the dust, and no one knows what my gift was nor to whom.

But the young Prince did pass by our door, and I flung the jewel from my breast before his path.

8

WHEN the lamp went out by my bed I woke up with the early birds.

I sat at my open window with a fresh wreath on my loose hair.

The young traveller came along the road in the rosy mist of the morning. A pearl chain was on his neck, and the sun's rays fell on his crown. He stopped before my door and asked me with an eager cry, 'Where is she?'

For very shame I could not say, 'She is I, young traveller, she is L'

It was dusk and the lamp was not lit.

I was listlessly braiding my hair.

The young traveller came on his chariot in the glow of the setting sun.

His horses were foaming at the mouth, and there was dust on his garment. He alighted at my door and asked in a tired voice, 'Where is she?'

For very shame I could not say, 'She is I, weary traveller, she is L'

It is an April night. The lamp is burning in my room:

The breeze of the south comes gently.

The noisy parrot sleeps in its cage.

My bodice is of the colour of the peacock's throat, and my mantle is green as young grass.

I sit upon the floor at the window watching the deserted street.

Through the dark night I keep humming, 'She is I, despairing traveller, she is L'

9

WHEN I go alone at night to my love-tryst, birds do not sing, the wind does not stir, the houses on both sides of the street stand silent.

It is my own anklets that grow loud at every step and I am ashamed.

When I sit on my balcony and listen for his footsteps, leaves do not rustle on the trees, and the water is still in the river like the sword on the knees of a sentry fallen asleep.

It is my own heart that beats wildly-I do not know how to quiet it.

When my love comes and sits by my side, when my body trembles and my eyelids droop, the night darkens, the wind blows out the lamp, and the clouds draw veils over the stars.

It is the jewel at my own breast that shines and gives light. I do not know how to hide it.

10

LET your work be, bride. Listen, the guest has come.

Do you hear, he is gently shaking the chain which fastens the door?

See that your anklets make no loud noise, and that your step is not over-hurried at meeting him.

Let your work be, bride, the guest has come in the evening.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

It is the full moon on a night of April; shadows are pale in the courtyard; the sky overhead is bright.

Draw your veil over your face if you must, carry the lamp to the door if you fear.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

Have no word with him if you are shy; stand aside by the door when you meet him.

If he asks you questions, and if you wish to, you can lower your eyes in silence.

Do not let your bracelets jingle when, lamp in hand, you lead him in.

Have no word with him if you are shy.

Have you not finished your work yet, bride? Listen, the guest has come.

Have you not lit the lamp in the cowshed? Have you not got ready the offering basket for the evening service?

Have you not put the red lucky mark at the parting of your hair, and done your toilet for the night?

O bride, do you hear, the guest has come?

Let your work be!

11

COME as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

If your braided hair has loosened, if the parting of your hair be not straight, if the ribbons of your bodice be not fastened, do not mind.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.

If the raddle come from your feet because of the dew, if the rings of bells upon your feet slacken, if pearls drop out of your chain, do not mind.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?

Flocks of cranes fly up from the further river-bank and fitful gusts of wind rush over the heath.

The anxious cattle run to their stalls in the village.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?

In vain you light your toilet lamp-it flickers and goes out in the wind.

Who can know that your eyelids have not been touched with lampblack? For your eyes are darker than rain-clouds.

In vain you light your toilet lamp-it goes out.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

If the wreath is not woven, who cares; if the wrist-chain has not been linked, let it be.

The sky is overcast with clouds-it is late.

Come as you are; do not loiter over toilet.

12

IF you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake.

The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret.

The shadow of the coming rain is on the sands, and the clouds hang low upon the blue lines of the trees like the heavy hair above your eyebrows.

I know well the rhythm of your steps, they are beating in my heart,

Come, O come to my lake, if you must fill your pitcher.

If you would be idle and sit listless and let your pitcher float on the water, come, O come to my lake.

The grassy slope is green, and the wild flowers beyond number.

Your thoughts will stray out of your dark eyes like birds from their nests. Your veil will drop to your feet.

Come, O come to my lake if you must sit idle.

If you would leave off your play and dive in the water, come, O come to my lake.

Let your blue mantle lie on the shore; the blue water will cover you and hide you.

The waves will stand a-tiptoe to kiss your neck and whisper in your ears.

Come, O come to my lake, if you would dive in the water.

If you must be mad and leap to your death, come, O come to my lake.

It is cool and fathomlessly deep.

It is dark like a sleep that is dreamless.

There in its depths nights and days are one, and songs are silence.

Come, O come to my lake, if you would plunge to your death.

13

I ASKED nothing, only stood at the edge of the wood behind the tree,

Languor was still upon the eyes of the dawn, and the dew in the air.

The lazy smell of the damp grass hung in the thin mist above the earth.

Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.

And I was standing still.

I did not say a word. It was the bird that sang unseen from the thicket.

The mango tree was shedding its flowers upon the village road, and the bees came humming one by one.

On the side of the pond the gate of *Shiva's* temple was opened and the worshipper had begun his chants.

With the vessel on your lap you were milking the cow.

I stood with my empty can.

I did not come near you.

The sky woke with the sound of the gong at the temple.

The dust was raised in the road from the hoofs of the driven cattle.

With the gurgling pitchers at their hips, women came from the river.

Your bracelets were jingling, and foam brimming over the jar.

The morning wore on and I did not come near you.

14

I WAS walking by the road, I do not know why, when the noonday was past and bamboo branches rustled in the wind.

The prone shadows with their outstretched arms clung to the feet of the hurrying light.

The *koels* were weary of their songs.

I was walking by the road, I do not know why.

The hut by the side of the water is shaded by an overhanging tree.

Some one was busy with her work, and her bangles made music in the corner.

I stood before this hut, I know not why

The narrow winding road crosses many a mustard field, and many a mango forest.

It passes by the temple of the village and the market at the river landingplace.

I stopped by this hut, I do not know why.

Years ago it was a day of breezy March when the murmur of the spring was languorous, and mango blossoms were dropping on the dust.

The rippling water leapt and licked the brass vessel that stood on the landing-step.

I think of that day of breezy March, I do not know why.

Shadows are deepening and cattle returning to their folds.

The light is grey upon the lonely meadows, and the villagers are waiting for the ferry at the bank.

I slowly return upon my steps, I do not know why.

15

I RUN AS a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest mad with his own perfume.

The night is the night of mid-May, the breeze is the breeze of the south.

I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire.

The gleaming vision flits on.

I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.

I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

16

HANDS cling to hands and eyes linger on eyes: thus begins the record of our hearts.

It is the moonlit night of March; the sweet smell of *henna is* in the air; my flute lies on the earth neglected and your garland of flowers is unfinished.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

Your veil of the saffron colour makes my eyes drunk.

The jasmine wreath that you wove me thrills to my heart like praise.

It is a game of giving and with-holding, revealing and screening again; some smiles and some little shyness, and some sweet useless struggles.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

No mystery beyond the present; no striving for the impossible; no shadow behind the charm; no groping in the depth of the dark.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

We do not stray out of all words into the ever silent; we do not raise our hands to the void for things beyond hope.

It is enough what we give and we get.

We have not crushed the joy to the utmost to wring from it the wine of pain.

This love between you and me is simple as a song.

17

THE yellow bird sings in its tree and makes my heart dance with gladness.

We both live in the same village, and that is our one piece of joy.

Her pair of pet lambs come to graze in the shade of our garden trees.

If they stray into our barley field, I take them up in my arms.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

Only one field lies between us.

Bees that have hived in our grove go to seek honey in theirs.

Flowers launched from their landing-stairs come floating by the stream where we bathe.

Baskets of dried *kusin* flowers come from their fields to our market.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

The lane that winds to their house is fragrant in the spring with mango flowers.

When their linseed is ripe for harvest the hemp is in bloom in our field.

The stars that smile on their cottage send us the same twinkling look.

The rain that floods their tank makes glad our *kadam* forest.

The name of our village is Khanjana, and Anjana they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjana.

18

WHEN the two sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile.

They must be aware of somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters whisper to each other when they pass this spot.

They must have guessed the secret of that somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

Their pitchers lurch suddenly, and water spills when they reach this spot.

They must have found out that somebody's heart is beating who stands behind the tree whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters glance at each other when they come to this spot, and they smile.

There is a laughter in their swift-stepping feet, which makes confusion in somebody's mind who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

19

YOU walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip.

Why did you swiftly turn your face and peep at me through your fluttering veil?

That gleaming look from the dark came upon me like a breeze that sends a shiver through the rippling water and sweeps away to the shadowy shore.

It came to me like the bird of the evening that hurriedly flies across the lampless room from the one open window to the other, and disappears in the night.

You are hidden as a star behind the hills, and I am a passer-by upon the road. But why did you stop for a moment and glance at my face through your veil while you walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip?

20

DAY after day he comes and goes away.

Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.

If he asks who was it that sent it, I entreat you do not tell him my name for he only comes and goes away.

He sits on the dust under the tree.

Spread there a seat with flowers and leaves, my friend.

His eyes are sad, and they bring sadness to my heart.

He does not speak what he has in mind; he only comes and goes away.

21

WHY did he choose to come to my door, the wandering youth, when the day dawned?

As I come in and out I pass by him every time, and my eyes are caught by his face.

I know not if I should speak to him or keep silent. Why did he choose to come to my door?

The cloudy nights in July are dark; the sky is soft blue in the autumn; the spring days are restless with the south wind.

He weaves his songs with fresh tunes every time.

I turn from my work and my eyes fill with the mist.

Why did he choose to come to my door?

22

WHEN she passed by me with quick steps, the end of her skirt touched me.

From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden warm breath of spring.

A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment, like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart.

23

WHY do you sit there and jingle your bracelets in mere idle sport?

Fill your pitcher. It is time for you to come home.

Why do you stir the water with your hands and fitfully glance at the road for some one in mere idle sport?

Fill your pitcher and come home.

The morning hours pass by-the dark water flows on.

The waves are laughing and whispering to each other in mere idle sport.

The wandering clouds have gathered at the edge of the sky on yonder rise of the land.

They linger and look at your face and smile in mere idle sport.

Fill your pitcher and come home.

24

DO not keep to yourself the secret of your heart, my friend!

Say it to me, only to me, in secret. You who smile so gently, softly whisper, my heart will hear it, not my ears.

The night is deep, the house is silent, the birds' nests are shrouded with sleep.

Speak to me through hesitating tears, through faltering smiles, through sweet shame and pain, the secret of your heart!

25

'COME TO US, youth, tell us truly why there is madness in your eyes?'

'I know not what wine of wild poppy I have drunk, that there is this madness in my eyes.'

'Ah, shame!'

'Well, some are wise and some foolish, some are watchful and some careless. There are eyes that smile and eyes that weep-and madness is in my eyes.'

'Youth, why do you stand so still under the shadow of the tree?'

'My feet are languid with the burden of my heart, and I stand still in the shadow.'

'Ah, shame!'

'Well, some march on their way and some linger, some are free and some are fettered-and my feet are languid with the burden of my heart.'

26

'WHAT comes from your willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

'If there be a stray flower for me I will wear it in my heart.' 'But if there be thorns?' 'I will endure them.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

'If but once you should raise your loving eyes to my face it would make my life sweet beyond death.'

'But if there be only cruel glances?'

'I will keep them piercing my heart.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.'

27

TRUST love even if it brings sorrow. Do not close up your heart.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'The heart is only for giving away with a tear and a song, my love.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is strong and abiding.

Let sorrowful love wake in your eyes.'

'Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

'The lotus blooms in the sight of the sun, and loses all that it has. It would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist.'

'All no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.'

28

YOUR questioning eyes are sad. They seek to know my meaning as the moon would fathom the sea. I have bared my

life before your eyes from end to end, with nothing hidden or held back. That is why you know me not.

If it were only a gem, I could break it into a hundred pieces and string them into a chain to put on your neck.

If it were only a flower, round and small and sweet, I could pluck it from its stem to set it in your hair.

But it is a heart, my beloved. Where are its shores and its bottom?

You know not the limits of this kingdom, still you are its queen.

If it were only a moment of pleasure it would flower in an easy smile, and you could see it and read it in a moment.

If it were merely a pain it would melt in limpid tears, reflecting its inmost secret without a word.

But it is love, my beloved.

Its pleasure and pain are boundless, and endless its wants and wealth.

It is as near to you as your life, but you can never wholly know it.

29

SPEAK to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

The night is dark. The stars are lost in clouds. The wind is sighing through the leaves.

I will let loose dry hair. My blue cloak will cling round me like night. I will clasp your head to my bosom; and there in the sweet loneliness murmur on your heart. I will shut my eyes and listen. I will not look in your face.

When your words are ended, we will sit still and silent. Only the trees will whisper in the dark.

The night will pale. The day will dawn. We shall look at each other's eyes and go on our different paths.

Speak to me, my love! Tell cue in words what you sang.

30

YOU are the evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams:

I paint you and fashion you ever with my love longings.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my endless dreams!

Your feet are rosy-red with the glow of my heart's desire, Gleaner of my sunset songs!

Your lips are bitter-sweet with the taste of my wine of pain.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my lonesome dreams!

With the shadow of my passion have I darkened your eyes,

Haunter of the depth of my gaze! I have caught you and wrapt you, my love, in the net of my music.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my deathless dreams!

31

MY heart, the bird of the wilderness, has found its sky in your eyes.

They are the cradle of the morning, they are the kingdom of the stars. My songs are lost in their depths.

Let the but soar in that sky, in its lonely immensity.

Let me but cleave its clouds and spread wings in its sunshine.

32

TELL me if this be all true, my love, tell me if this be true.

When these eyes flash their lightning the dark clouds in your breast make stormy answer.

Is it true that my lips are sweet like the opening bud of the first conscious love?

Do the memories of vanished months of May linger in my limbs?

Does the earth, like a harp, shiver into songs with the touch of my feet?

Is it then true that the dewdrops fall from the eyes of night when I am seen, and the morning light is glad when it wraps my body round?

Is it true, is it true, that your love travelled alone through ages and worlds in search of me?

That when you found me at last, your age-long desire found utter peace in my gentle speech and my eyes and lips and flowing hair?

Is it then true that the mystery of the infinite is written on this little forehead of mine?

Tell me, my lover, if all this be true.

33

I LOVE YOU, beloved. Forgive the my love.

Like a bird losing its way I am caught.

When my heart was shaken it lost its veil and was naked. Cover it with pity, beloved, and forgive me my love.

If you cannot love me, beloved, forgive me my pain.

Do not look askance at me from afar.

I will steal back to my corner and sit in the dark.

With both hands I will cover my naked shame.

Turn your face from me, beloved, and forgive me my pain.

If you love me, beloved, forgive me my joy.

When my heart is borne away by the flood of happiness, do not smile at my perilous abandonment.

When I sit on my throne and rule you with my tyranny of love, when like a goddess I grant you my favour, bear with my pride, beloved, and forgive me my joy.

34

DO not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep.

I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping.

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to touch you. I ask myself, 'Is it a dream?'

Could I but entangle your feet with my heart and hold them fast to my breast!

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

35

LEST I should know you too easily, you play with me.

You blind me with flashes of laughter to hide your tears.

I know, I know your art,

You never say the word you would.

Lest I should not prize you, you elude me in a thousand ways.

Lest I should confuse you with the crowd, you stand aside. I know,

I know your art,

Your never walk the path you would.

Your claim is more than that of others, that is why you are silent.

With playful carelessness you avoid my gifts.

I know, I know your art,

Your never will take what you would.

36

HE whispered, 'My love, raise your eyes.'

I sharply chid him, and said 'Go!'; but he did not stir.

He stood before me and held both my hands. I said, 'Leave me!'., but he did not go.

He brought his face near my ear. I glanced at him and said, 'What a shame!'; but he did not move.

His lips touched my cheek. I trembled and said, 'You dare too much'; but he had no shame.

He put a flower in my hair. I said, 'It is useless?'; but he stood unmoved.

He took the garland from my neck and went away. I weep and ask my heart, 'Why does he not come back?'

37

WOULD you put your wreath of fresh flowers on my neck, fair one?

But you must know that the one wreath that I had woven is for the many, for those who are seen in glimpses, or dwell in lands unexplored, or live in poets' songs.

It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.

There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume was stored in its core.

Now it is squandered far and wide.

Who knows the enchantment that can gather and shut it up again?

My heart is not mine to give to one only, it is given to the many.

38

My love, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind.

Alas, I was not careful, and it struck your ringing anklets and came to grief.

It broke up into scraps of songs and lay scattered at your feet.

All my cargo of the stories of old wars was tossed by the laughing waves and soaked in tears and sank.

You must make this loss good to me, my love.

If my claims to immortal fame after death are shattered, make me immortal while I live.

And I will not mourn for my loss nor blame you.

39

I TRY to weave a wreath all the morning, but the flowers slip and they drop out.

You sit there watching me in secret through the corner of your prying eyes.

Ask those eyes, darkly planning mischief, whose fault it was.

I try to sing a song, but in vain.

A hidden smile trembles on your lips, ask of it the reason of my failure..

Let your smiling lips say on oath how my voice lost itself in silence like a drunken bee in the lotus.

It is evening, and the time for the flowers to close their petals.

Give me leave to sit by your side, and bid my lips to do the work that can be done in silence and in the dim light of stars.

40

AN UNBELIEVING smile flits on your eyes when I come to you to take my leave.

I have done it so often that you think I will soon return.

To tell you the truth I have the same doubt in my mind.

For the spring days come again time after time, the full moon takes leave and comes on another visit, the flowers come again and blush upon their branches year after year, and it is likely that I take my leave only to come to you again.

But keep the illusion awhile; do not send it away with ungentle haste.

When I say I leave you for all time, accept it as true, and let a mist of tears for one moment deepen the dark rim of your eyes.

Then smile as archly as you like when I come again.

41

I LONG to speak the deepest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh.

'That is why I laugh at myself and shatter my secret in jest.

I make light of my pain, afraid you should do so.

I long to tell you the truest words I have to say to you; but I dare not being afraid that you would not believe them.

That is why I disguise them in untruth, saying the contrary of what I mean.

I make my pain appear absurd, afraid that you should do so.

I long to use the most precious words I have for you; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value.

That is why I give you hard names and boast of my callous strength.

I hurt you, for fear you should never know any pain.

I long to sit silent by you; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips.

That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words.

I rudely handle my pain, for fear you should do so.

I long to go away from your side; but I dare not, for fear my cowardice should become known to you.

That is why I hold my head high and carelessly come into your presence.

Constant thrusts from your eyes keep my pain fresh for ever.

42

O MAD, superbly drunk;

If you kick open your doors and play the fool in public;

If you empty your bag in a night, and snap your fingers at prudence;

If you walk in curious paths and play with useless things;

Peck not rhyme or reason;

If unfurling your sails before the storm you snap the rudder in two,

Then I will follow you, comrade, and be drunken and go to the dogs.

I have wasted my days and nights in the company of steady wise neighbours.

Much knowing has turned my hair grey, and much watching has made my sight dim.

For years I have gathered and heaped up scraps and fragments of things:

Crush them and dance upon them, and scatter them all to the winds.

For I know 'tis the height of wisdom to be drunken and go to the dogs.

Let all crooked scruples vanish, let me hopelessly lose my way.

Let a gust of wild giddiness come and sweep me away from my anchors.

The world is peopled with worthies, and workers, useful and clever.

There are men who are easily first, and men who come decently after.

Let them be happy and prosper, and let me be foolishly futile.

For I know 'tis the end of all works to be drunken and go to the dogs.

I swear to surrender this moment all claims to the ranks

of the decent.

I let go my pride of learning and judgment of right and of wrong.

I'll shatter memory's vessel, scattering the last drop of tears.

With the foam of the berry-red wine I will bathe and brighten my laughter.

The badge of the civil and staid I'll tear into shreds for the nonce.

I'll take the holy vow to be worthless, to be drunken and go to the dogs.

43

No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.

I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.

It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic.

44

REVEREND sir, forgive this pair of sinners. Spring winds to-day are blowing in wild eddies, driving dust and dead leaves away, and with them your lessons are all lost.

Do not say, father, that life is a vanity.

For we have made truce with death for once, and only for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal.

Even if the king's army came and fiercely fell upon us we should sadly shake our heads and say, Brothers, you are disturbing us. If you must have this noisy game, go and clatter your arms elsewhere. Since only for a few fleeting moments we have been made immortal.

If friendly people came and flocked around us, we should humbly bow to them and say, This extravagant good fortune is an embarrassment to us. Room is scarce in the infinite sky where we dwell. For in the spring-time flowers come in crowds, and the busy wings of bees jostle each other. Our little heaven, where dwell only we two immortals, is too absurdly narrow.

45

To the guests that must go bid God's speed and brush away all traces of their steps.

Take to your bosom with a smile what is easy and simple and near.

To-day is the festival of phantoms that know not when they die.

Let your laughter be but a meaningless mirth like twinkles of light on the ripples.

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.

Strike in chords from your harp fitful momentary rhythms.

46

YOU left ME and went on your way.

I thought I should mourn for you and set your solitary image in my heart wrought in a golden song.

But ah, my evil fortune, time is short.

Youth wanes year after year; the spring days are fugitive; the frail flowers die for nothing, and the wise man warns me that life is but a dewdrop on the lotus leaf,

Should I neglect all this to gaze after who has turned her back on me?

That would be rude and foolish, for time is short.

Then come, my rainy nights with pattering feet; smile, my golden autumn; come, careless April scattering your kisses abroad.

You come, and you, and you also!

My loves, you know we are mortals. Is it wise to break one's heart for the one takes her heart away? For time is short.

It is sweet to sit in a corner to muse and write in rhymes that you are all my world.

It is heroic to hug one's sorrow and determine not to be consoled. But a fresh face peeps across my door and raises its eyes to my eyes. I cannot but wipe away my tears and change the tune of my song. For time short.

47

IF YOU would have it so, I will end my singing.

If it sets your heart a flutter, I will take away my eyes from your face.

If it suddenly startles you in your walk, I will step aside and take another path.

If it confuses you in your flower-weaving, I will shun your lonely garden.

If it makes the water wanton and wild, I will not row my boat by your bank.

48

FREE me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love! No more of this wine of kisses.

This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart.

Open the doors, make room for the morning light.

I am lost in you, wrapped in the folds of your caresses.

Free me from your spells, and give me back the manhood to offer you my freed heart.

49

I HOLD her hands and press her to my breast.

I try to fill my aims with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.

Ah, but, where is it? Who can strain the blue from the sky?

I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands.

Baffled and weary I come back.

How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch?

50

LOVE, my heart longs day and night for the meeting with you-for the meeting that is like all-devouring death.

Sweep me away like a storm; take everything I have; break open my sleep and plunder my dreams. Rob me of my world.

In that devastation, in the utter nakedness of spirit, let us become one in beauty.

Alas for my vain desire! Where is this hope for union except in thee, my God?

51

THEN finish the song and let us leave.

Forget this night when the night is no more.

Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it bruises my breast.

52

WHY did the lamp go out?

I shaded it with my cloak to save it from the wind, that is why the lamp went out.

Why did the flower fade?

I pressed it to my heart with anxious love, that is why the flower faded.

Why did the stream dry up?

I put a dam across it to have it for my use, that is why the stream dried up.

Why did the harp-string break?

I tried to force a note that was beyond its power, that is why the harpstring is broken.

53

WHY do you put me to shame with a look?

I have not come as a beggar.

Only for a passing hour I stood at the end of your courtyard outside the garden hedge.

Why do you put me to shame with a look?

Not a rose did I gather from your garden, not a fruit did I pluck.

I humbly took my shelter under the wayside shade where every strange traveller may stand.

Not a rose did I pluck.

Yes, my feet were tired, and the shower of rain came down.

The winds cried out among the swaying bamboo branches.

The clouds ran across the sky as though in the flight from defeat.

My feet were tired.

I know not what you thought of me or for whom you were waiting at your door.

Flashes of lightning dazzled your watching eyes.

How could I know that you could see me where I stood in the dark?

I know not what you thought of me.

The day is ended, and the rain has ceased for a moment.

I leave the shadow of the tree at the end of your garden and this seat on the grass.

It has darkened; shut your door; I go my way. The day is ended.

54

WHERE do you hurry with your basket this late evening when the marketing is over?

They all have come home with their burdens; the moon peeps from above the village trees.

The echoes of the voices calling for the ferry run across the dark water to the distant swamp where wild ducks sleep.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

Sleep has laid her fingers upon the eyes of the earth.

The nests of the crows have become silent, and the murmurs of the bamboo leaves are silent.

The labourers home from their fields spread their mats in the courtyards.

Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

55

IT WAS mid-day when you went away.

The sun was strong in the sky. I had done my work and sat alone on my balcony when you went away.

Fitful gusts came winnowing through the smells of many distant fields.

The doves cooed tireless in the shade, and a bee strayed in my room humming the news of many distant fields.

The village slept in the noonday heat. The road lay deserted.

In sudden fits the rustling of the leaves rose and died.

I gazed at the sky and wove in the blue the letters of a name I had known, while the village slept in the noonday heat.

I had forgotten to braid my hair. The languid breeze played with it upon my cheek.

The river ran unruffled under the shady bank.

The lazy white clouds did not move.

I had forgotten to braid my hair.

It was mid-day when you went away.

The dust of the road was hot and the fields panting.

The doves cooed among the dense leaves.

I was alone in my balcony when you went away.

56

I WAS one among many women busy with the obscure daily tasks of the household.

Why did you single me out and bring me away from the cool shelter of our common life?

Love unexpressed is sacred.

It shines like gems in the gloom of the hidden heart.

In the light of the curious day it looks pitifully dark.

Ah, you broke through the cover of my heart and dragged my trembling love into the open place, destroying for ever the shady corner where it hid its nest.

The other women are the same as ever.

No one has peeped into their inmost being, and they themselves know not their own secret.

Lightly they smile, and weep, chatter, and work. Daily they go to the temple, light their lamps, and fetch water from the river.

I hoped my love would be saved from the shivering shame of the shelterless, but you turn your face away.

Yes, your path lies open before you, but you have cut off my return, and left me stripped naked before the world with its lidless eyes staring night and day.

57

I PLUCKED your flower, O world!

I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.

. When the day waned and it darkened, I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained.

More flowers will come to you with perfume and pride, O world!

But my time for flower-gathering is over, and through the dark night I have not my rose, only the pain remains.

58

ONE Morning in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.

I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.

I kissed her and said, 'You are blind even as the flowers are.'

'You yourself know rot how beautiful is your gift.'

59

O WOMAN, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery; painters are giving your form ever new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mine their gold, the summer gardens their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious.

The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.

You are one half woman and one half dream.

60

AMIDST the rush and roar of life, O Beauty, carved in stone, you stand mute and still, alone and aloof.

Great Time sits enamoured at your feet and murmurs:

'Speak, speak to me, my love; speak, my brides

But your speech is shut up in stone, O Immovable Beauty!

61

PEACE, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but completeness.

Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.

Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over the nest.

Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the night.

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last words in silence.

I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

62

IN the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a desolate street.

In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch. and the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me.

She raised her large eyes to my face and mutely asked, 'Are you well, my friend?'

I tried to answer, but our language had been lost and forgotten.

I thought and thought; our names would not come to my mind.

Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp had flickered in the evening breeze and died.

63

TRAVELLER, must you go?

The night is still and the darkness swoons upon the forest.

The lamps are bright in our balcony, the flowers all fresh, and the youthful eyes still awake.

Is the time for your parting come?

Traveller, must you go?

We have not bound your feet with our entreating arms.

Your doors are open. Your horse stands saddled at the gate.

If we have tried to bar your passage it was but with our songs.

Did we ever try to hold you back it was but with our eyes.

Traveller, we are helpless to keep you. We have only our tears.

What quenchless fire glows in your eyes?

What restless fever runs in your blood?

What call from the dark urges you?

What awful incantation have you read among the stars in the sky, that with a sealed secret message the night entered your heart, silent and strange?

If you do not care for merry meetings, if you must have peace, weary heart, we shall put our lamps out and silence our harps.

We shall sit still in the dark in the rustle of leaves, and the tired moon will shed pale rays on your window.

O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched you from the heart of the midnight?

64

I SPENT my day on the scorching hot dust of the road.

Now, in the cool of the evening, I knock at the door of the inn. It is deserted and in ruins.

A grim *ashath* tree spreads its hungry clutching roots through the gaping fissures of the walls.

Days have been when wayfarers came here to wash their weary feet.

They spread their mats in the courtyard in the dim light of the early moon, and sat and talked of strange lands.

They woke refreshed in the morning when birds made them glad, and friendly flowers nodded their heads at them from the wayside.

But no lighted lamp awaited me when I came here.

The black smudges of smoke left by many a forgotten evening lamp stare, like blind eyes, from the wall.

Fireflies flit in the bush near the dried-up pond, and bamboo branches fling their shadows on the grass-grown path.

I am the guest of no one at the end of my day. The long night is before me, and I am tired.

65

Is THAT YOUR call again?

The evening has come. Weariness clings round me like the arms of entreating love.

Do you call me?

I had given all my day to you, cruel mistress, must you also rob me of my night?

Somewhere there is an end to everything, and the loneness of the dark is one's own.

Must your voice cut through it and smite me?

Has the evening no music of sleep at your gate?

Do the silent-winged stars never climb the sky above your pitiless tower?

Do the flowers never drop on the dust in soft death in your garden?

Must you call me, you unquiet one?

Then let the sad eyes of love vainly watch and weep.

Let the lamp burn in the lonely house.

Let the ferry-boat take the weary labourers to their home.

I leave behind my dreams and I hasten to your call.

66

A WANDERING madman was seeking the touchstone, with matted locks, tawny and dust-laden, and worn to a shadow, his lips tight-pressed, like the shut-up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of a glow-worm seeking its mate.

Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselcssly talked of hidden treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their meaning.

Maybe he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,-

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable

Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached-

Even so on the lonely shore. the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, 'Tell me, where did you come at this golden chain about your waist?'

The madman started-the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.

He struck his forehead wildly - where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?

It had grown into a habit, to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

The sun was sinking low in the west, the sky was of gold. The madman returned on his footsteps to seek anew the lost treasure, with his strength gone, his body bent, and his heart in the dust, like a tree uprooted.

67

THOUGH the evening comes with slow steps and has signalled for all songs to cease;

Though your companions have gone to their rest and you are tired;

Though fear broods in the dark and the face of the sky is veiled;

Yet, bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

That is not the gloom of the leaves of the forest, that is the sea swelling like a dark black snake.

That is not the dance of the flowering jasmine, that is flashing foam.

Ah, where is the sunny green shore, where is your nest?

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

The lone night lies along your path, the dawn sleeps behind the shadowy hills.

The stars hold their breath counting the hours, the feeble moon swims the deep night.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

There is no hope, no fear for you.

There is no word, no whisper, no cry.

There is no home, no bed of rest.

There is only your own pair of wings and the pathless sky.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

68

NONE lives for ever, brother, and nothing lasts for long. Keep that in mind and rejoice.

Our life is not the one old burden, our path is not the one long journey.

One sole poet has not to sing one aged song.

The flower fades and dies; but he who wears the flower has not to mourn for it for ever.

Brother, keep that in mind rejoice.

There must come a full pause to weave perfection into music.

Life droops toward its sunset to be drowned in the golden shadows.

Love must be called from its play to drink sorrow and be borne to the heaven of tears.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

We hasten to gather our flowers lest they are plundered by the passing winds..

It quickens our blood and brightens our eyes to snatch kisses that would vanish if we delayed.

Our life is eager, our desires are keen, for time tolls the bell of parting.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There is not time for us to clasp a thing and crush it and fling it away to the dust.

The hours trip rapidly away, hiding their dreams in their skirts. Our life is short; it yields but a few days for love.

Were it for work and drudgery it would be endlessly long.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

Beauty is sweet to us, because she dances to the same fleeting tune with our lives.

Knowledge is precious to us, because we shall never have time to complete it.

All is done and finished in the eternal Heaven.

But earth's flowers of illusion are kept eternally fresh by death.

Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

69

I HUNT for the golden stag.

You may smile, my friends, but I pursue the vision that eludes me.

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands, because I am hunting for the golden stag.

You come and buy in the market and go back to your homes laden with goods, but the spell of the homeless winds has touched me I know not when and where.

I have no care in my heart; all my belongings I have left far behind me:

I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands because I am hunting for the golden stag.

70

I REMEMBER a day in my childhood I floated a paper boat in the ditch.

It was a wet day of July; I was alone and happy over my play.

I floated my paper boat in the ditch.

Suddenly the storm clouds thickened, winds came in gusts, and rain poured in torrents.

Rills of muddy water rushed and swelled the stream and sunk my boat.

Bitterly I thought in my mind that the storm came on purpose to spoil my happiness; all its malice was against me.

The cloudy day of July is long today, and I have been musing over all those games in life wherein I was loser.

I was blaming my fate for the many tricks it played on me, when suddenly I remembered the paper boat that sank in the ditch.

71

THE day is not yet done, the fair is not over, the fair on the river-bank.

I had feared that my time had been squandered and my last penny lost.

But no, my brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything..

The selling and buying are over.

All the dues on both sides have been gathered in, and it is time for me to go home.

But, gatekeeper, do you ask for your toll?

Do not fear, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The lull in the wind threatens storm, and the lowering clouds in the west bode no good.

The hushed water waits for the wind. I hurry to cross the river before the night overtakes me.

O ferryman, you want your fee!

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not

cheated me of everything.

In the wayside under the tree sits the beggar. Alas, he looks at my face with a timid hope!

He thinks I am rich with the day's profit.

Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The. night grows dark and the road lonely. Fireflies gleam among the leaves.

Who are you that follow me with stealthy silent steps?

Ah, I know, it is your desire to rob me of all my gains. I will not disappoint you!

For I still have something left, and my fate has not cheated me of everything.

At midnight I reach home. My hands are empty.

You are waiting with anxious eyes at my door, sleepless and silent.

Like a timorous bird you fly to my breast with eager love.

Ay, ay, my God, much remains still. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

72

WITH days of hard travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.

I forgot all else, I shunned all the world, I gazed in rapt contemplation at the image I had set upon the altar.

It was always night inside, and lit by the lamps of perfumed oil.

The ceaseless smoke of incense wound my heart in its heavy coils.

Sleepless, I carved on the walls fantastic figures in mazy bewildering lines-winged horses, flowers with human faces, women with limbs like serpents.

No passage was left anywhere through which could enter the song of birds, the murmur of leaves, or hum of the busy village.

The only sound that echoed in its dark dome was that of incantations which I chanted.

My mind became keen and still like a pointed flame, my senses swooned in ecstasy.

I knew not how time passed till the thunderstorm had struck the temple, and a pain stung me through the heart.

The lamp looked pale and ashamed; the carvings on the walls, like chained dreams, stared meaningless in the light as they would fain hide themselves.

I looked at the image on the altar. I saw it smiling and alive with the living touch of God. The night I had imprisoned had spread its wings and vanished.

73

INFINITE wealth is not yours, my patient and dusky mother dust!

You toil to fill the mouths of your children, but food is scarce.

The gift of gladness that you have for us is never perfect.

The toys that you make for your children are fragile.

You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but should I desert you for that?

Your smile which is shadowed with pain is sweet to my eyes.

Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear to my heart.

From your breast you have fed us with life but not immortality, that is why your eyes are ever wakeful.

For ages you are working with colour and song, yet your heaven is not built, but only its sad suggestion

Over your creations of beauty there is the mist of tears.

I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your love.

I will worship you with labour.

I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful dust, Mother Earth.

74

IN THE world's audience hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight.

Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of the clouds and forests.

But, you man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.

The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.

And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust.

75

AT MIDNIGHT the would-be ascetic announced:

'This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here?'

God whispered, 'I,' but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

The man said, 'Who are ye that have fooled me so long?

The voice said again, 'They are God,' but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home,' but still he heard not.

God sighed and complained, 'Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me?'

76

THE fair was on before the temple. It had rained from the early morning and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of the crowd was the bright smile of a girl who bought for a farthing a whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated above all laughter and noise.

An endless throng of people came and jostled together. The road was muddy, the river in flood, the field under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy's trouble-he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men so pitiful.

77

THE workman and his wife from the west country are busy digging to make bricks for the kiln.

Their little daughter goes to the landing-place by the river; there she has no end of scouring and scrubbing of pots and pans.

Her little brother, with shaven head and brown, naked mud-covered limbs, follows after her and waits patiently on the high bank at her bidding.

She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right-she the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household cares.

One day I saw this naked boy sitting with legs outstretched.

In the water his sister sat rubbing a drinking-pot with a handful of earth, turning it round and round.

Near by a soft-haired lamb stood grazing along the bank.

It came close to where the boy sat and suddenly bleated aloud, and the child started up and screamed.

His sister left off cleaning her pot and ran up.

She took up her brother in one arm and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man.

78

IT WAS in May, The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat.

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, 'Come, my darling!'

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

79

I OFTEN wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a remote morning of creation ran the simple path by which their hearts visited each other.

Those marks of their constant tread have not been effaced though their kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man's face with a tender trust, and the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection. It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise.

80

WITH A glance of your eyes you could plunder all the wealth of songs struck from poets' harps, fair woman!

But for their praises you have no ear, therefore I come to praise you.

You could humble at your feet the proudest heads in the world.

But it is your loved ones, unknown to fame, whom you choose to worship, therefore I worship you.

The perfection of your arms would add glory to kingly splendour with their touch.

But you use them to sweep away the dust, and to make clean your humble home, therefore I am filled with awe.

81

WHY do you whisper so faintly in my ears, O Death, my Death?

When the flowers droop in the evening and cattle come back to their stalls, you stealthily come to my side and speak words that I do not understand.

Is this how you must woo and win me with the opiate of drowsy murmur and cold kisses, O Death, my Death?

Will there be no proud ceremony for our wedding?

Will you not tie up with a wreath your tawny coiled locks?

Is there none to carry your banner before you, and will not the night be on fire with your red torch-lights, O Death, my Death?

Come with your conch-shells sounding, come in the sleepless night.

Dress me with a crimson mantle, grasp my hand and take me.

Let your chariot be ready at my door with your horses neighing impatiently.

Raise my veil and look at my race proudly, O Death, my Death!

82

We are to play the game of death to-night, my bride and I.

The night is black, the clouds in the sky are capricious, and the waves are raving at sea.

We have left our bed of dreams, flung open the door and come out, my bride and I.

We sit upon a swing, and the storm winds give us a wild push from behind.

My bride starts up with fear and delight, she trembles and clings to my breast.

Long have I served her tenderly.

I made for her a bed of flowers and I closed the doors to shut out the rude light from her eyes.

I kissed her gently on her lips and whispered softly in her ears till she half swooned in languor.

She was lost in the endless mist of vague sweetness..

She answered not to my touch, my songs failed to arouse her.

To-night has come to us the call of the storm from the wild.

My bride has shivered and stood up, she has clasped my hand and come out.

Her hair is flying in the wind, her veil is fluttering, her garland rustles over her breast.

The push of death has swung her info life.

We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride and I.

83

SHE dwelt on the hillside by the edge of a maize-field, near the-spring that flows in laughing rills through the solemn shadows of ancient trees. The women came there to fill their jars, and travellers would sit there to rest and talk. She worked and dreamed daily to the tune of the bubbling stream.

One evening the stranger came down from the cloud-hidden peak; his locks were tangled like drowsy snakes. We asked in wonder, Who are you?' He answered not but sat by the garrulous stream and silently gazed at the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts quaked in fear and we came back home when it was night.

Next morning when the women came to fetch water at the spring by the *deodar* trees, they found the doors open in her hut, but her voicé was gone and where was her smiling face? The empty jar lay on the floor and her lamp had burnt itself out in the comer. No one knew where she had fled to before it was morning- and the stranger had gone.

In the month of May the sun grew strong and the snow melted, and we sat by the spring and wept. We wondered in our mind, Is there a spring in the land where she has gone and where she can fill her vessel in these hot thirsty days?' And we asked each other in dismay, 'Is there a land beyond these hills where we live?'

It was a summer night; the breeze blew from the south; and I sat in her deserted room where the lamp stood still unlit. When suddenly from before my eyes the hills vanished like curtains drawn aside. 'Ah, it is she who comes. How are you, my child? Are you happy? But where can you shelter under this open sky? And, alas! our spring is not here to allay your thirst.'

'Here is the same sky,' she said, 'only free from the fencing hills; this is the same stream grown into a river,-the same earth widened into a plain,' Everything is here,' I sighed, 'only we are not.' She smiled sadly and said, You are in my heart.' I woke up and heard the babbling of the stream and the rustling of the deodars at night.

84

OVER the green and yellow lice-fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift-chasing sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey; drunken with light they foolishly hover and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river clamour in joy for

mere nothing.

Let none go back home, brothers, this morning, let none go to work.

Let us take the blue sky by storm and plunder space as we run.

Laughter floats in the air like foam on the flood.

Brothers, let us squander our morning in futile songs.

85

WHO are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence?

I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred years before.

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.

14

My Boyhood Days

14

My Boyhood Days

1

THE Calcutta where I was born was an altogether old-world place. Hackney carriages lumbered about the city raising clouds of dust, and the whips fell on the backs of skinny horses whose bones showed plainly below their hide. There were no trams then, no buses, no motors. Business was not the breathless rush that it is now, and the days went by in leisurely fashion. Clerks would take a good pull at the hookah before starting for office, and chew their betel as they went along. Some rode in palanquins, others joined in groups of four or five to hire a carriage in common, which was known as a "share-carriage". Wealthy men had monograms painted on their carriages, and a leather hood over the rear portion, like a half-drawn veil. The coachman sat on the box with his turban stylishly tilted to one side, and two grooms rode behind, girdles of yaks' tails round their waists, startling the pedestrians from their path with their shouts of "Hey-yo!"

Women used to go about in the stifling darkness of closed palanquins; they shrank from the idea of riding in carriages, and even to use an umbrella in sun or rain was considered unwomanly. Any woman who was so bold as to wear the new-fangled bodice, or shoes on her feet, was scornfully nicknamed "memsahib", that is to say, one who had cast off all sense of propriety or shame. If any woman unexpectedly encountered a stange mail, one outside her family circle, her veil would promptly descend to the very tip of her nose, and she would at once turn her back on him. The palanquins in which women went out were shut as closely as their apartments in the house. An additional covering, a kind of thick tilt, completely enveloped the palanquin of a rich man's daughters and daughters-in-law, so that it looked like a moving tomb. By its side went the durwan carrying his brass-bound stick. His work was to sit in the entrance and watch the house, to tend his beard, safely to conduct the money to the bank and the women to their relatives houses, and on festival days to dip the lady of the house into the Ganges, closed palanquin and all. Hawkers who came to the door with their array of wares would grease Shivnandan's palm to gain admission, and the drivers of hired carriages were also a source of profit to him. Sometimes a man who was unwilling to fall in with this idea of going shares would create a great scene in front of the porch

Our "jamadar" Sobha Ram, who was a wrestler, used to spend a good deal of time in practising his preaparatory feints and approaches, and in brandishing his heavy clubs. Sometimes he would sit and grind hemp for drink, and sometimes he would be quietly eating his raw radishes, tender leaves and all, when we boys would creep upon him and yell "Radhakrishna!" in his ear. The more he waved his arms and protested the more we delighted in teasing him. And perhaps-who knows?-his protests were merely a cunning device for hearing repeated the name of his favourite god.

There was no gas then in the city, and no electric light. When the kerosene lamp was introduced, its brilliance amazed us. In the evening the house-servant lit castor-oil lamps in every room. The one in our study-room had two wicks in a glass bowl By this dim light my master taught me from Peary Sarkar's First Book. First I would begin to yawn, and then, growing more and more sleepy, rub my heavy eyes. At such times I heard over and over again of the virtues of my master's other pupil Satin, a paragon of a boy with a wonderful head for study, who would rub snuff in his eyes to keep himself awake, so earnest was he. But as for me- the less said about that the better! Even the awful thought that I should probably remain the only dance in the family could not keep me awake. When nine o'clock struck I was released, my eyes dazed and my mind drugged with sleep.

There was a narrow passage, enclosed by latticed walls, leading from the outer apartments to the interior of the house. A dimly burning lantern swung from the ceiling. As I went along this passage, my mind would be haunted by the idea that something was creeping upon me from behind. Little shivers ran up and down my back. In those days devils and spirits lurked in the recesses of every man's mind, and the air was full of ghost stories. One day it would be some servant girl falling in a dead faint because she had heard the nasal whine of Shank-chunni. The female demon of that name was the most bad-tempered devil of all, and was said to be very greedy of fish. Another story was connected with the thick-leaved *badam* tree at the western corner of the house. A mysterious Shape was said to stand with one foot in its branches and the other on the third storey cornice of the house. Plenty of people declared that they had seen it, and there were not a few who believed them. A friend of my elder brother's laughingly made light of the story, and the servants looked upon him as lacking in all piety, and said that his neck would surely be wrung one day and his pretensions exposed. The very atmosphere was so enmeshed in ghostly terrors that I could not put my feet into the darkness under the table without them getting the creeps.

There were no water-pipes laid on in those days. In the spring months of *Magh* and *Falgoon* when the Ganges water was clear, our bearers would bring it up in brimming pots carried in a yoke across their shoulders. In the dark rooms of the ground floor stood rows of huge water jars filled with the whole year's supply of drinking water. All those musty, dingy, twilit rooms were the home of furtive "Things" which of us did not know all about those "Things"? Great gaping mouths they had, eyes in their breasts, and ears like winnowing fans; and their feet turned backwards. Small wonder that my heart would pound in my breast and my knees tremble when I

went into the inner garden, with the vision of those devilish shapes before me.

At high tide the water of the Ganges would flow along a masonry channel at the side of the road. Since my grandfather's time an allowance of this water had been discharged into our tank. When the sluices were opened the water rushed in, gurgling and foaming like a waterfall. I used to watch it fascinated, holding on by the railings of the south verandah. But the days of our tank were numbered, and finally there came a day when cartload after cartload of rubbish was tipped into it.

When the tank no longer reflected the garden, the last lingering illusion of rural life left it. That *badam* tree is still standing near the third storey cornice, but though his footholds remain, the ghostly shape that once bestrode them has disappeared for ever.

II

THE palanquin belonged to the days of my grandmother. It was of ample proportions and lordly appearance. It was big enough to have needed eight bearers for each pole. But when the former wealth and glory of the family had faded like the glowing clouds of sunset, the palanquin bearers, with their gold bracelets, their thick ear-rings, and their sleeveless red tunics, had disappeared along with it. The body of the palanquin had been decorated with coloured line drawings, some of which were now defaced. Its surface was stained and discoloured, and the coir stuffing was coming out of the upholstery. It lay in a corner of the countinghouse verandah as though it were a piece of common-place lumber. I was seven or eight years old at that time.

I was not yet, therefore, of an age to put my hand to any serious work in the world, and the old palanquin on its part had been dismissed from all useful service. Perhaps it was this fellow-feeling that so much attracted me towards it. It was to me an island in the midst of the ocean, and I on my holidays became Robinson Crusoe. There I sat within its closed doors, completely lost to view, delightfully safe from prying eyes.

Outside my retreat, our house was full of people, innumerable relatives and other folk. From all parts of the house I could hear the shouts of the various servants at their work. Pari the maid is returning from the bazaar through the front courtyard with her vegetables in a basket on her hip. Dukhon the bearer is carrying in Ganges water in a yoke across his shoulder. The weaver woman has gone into the inner apartments to trade the newest style of saries. Dinu the goldsmith, who receives a monthly wage, usually sits in the room next to the lane, blowing his bellows and carrying out the orders of the family; now he is coming to the counting house to present his bill to Kailash Mukherjee, who has a quill pen stuck over his ear. The carder sits in, the courtyard cleaning the cotton mattress stuffing on his twanging bow. Mukundalal the durwan is rolling on the ground outside with the one-eyed wrestler, trying out a new wrestling fall. He slaps his thighs loudly, and repeats his "physical jerks" twenty or thirty times, dropping on all fours. There is a crowd of beggars sitting waiting for their regular dole.

The day wears on, the heat grows intense, the clock in the gatehouse strikes the hour. But inside the palanquin the day does not acknowledge the authority of clocks. Our midday is that of former days, when the drum at the great door of the king's palace would be beaten for the breaking-up of the court, and the king would go to bathe in sandalscented water. At midday on holidays those in charge of me have their meal and go to sleep. I sit on alone. My palanquin, outwardly at rest, travels on its imaginary journeys. My bearers, sprung from "airy nothing" at my bidding, eating the salt of my imagination, carry me wherever my fancy leads. We pass through far, strange lands, and I give each country a name from the books I have read. My imagination has cut a road through a deep forest. Tigers' eyes blaze from the thickets, my flesh creeps and tingles. With me is Biswanath the hunter; his gun speaks-Crack! Crack! - and there, all is still. Sometimes my palanquin becomes a peacock-boat, floating far out on the ocean till the shore is out of sight. The oars fall into the water with a gentle plash, the waves swing and swell around us. The sailors cry to us to beware, a storm is coming. By the tiller stands Abdul the sailor, with his pointed beard, shaven moustache and close-cropped head. I know him, he brings hilsa fish and turtle eggs from the Padma for my elder brother.

Abdul has a story for me. One day at the end of Chaitra[1] he had gone out in a dinghy to catch fish when suddenly there arose a great Vaisakh gale[2]. It was a tremendous typhoon and the boat sank lower and lower. Abdul seized the low-rope in his teeth, and jumping into the water swam to the shore, where he pulled his dinghy up after him by the rope. But the story comes to an end far too quickly for my taste, and besides, the boat is not lost, everything is saved - that isn't what I call a story! Again and again I demand, "What next?". "Well," says Abdul at last, "after that there were great doings. What should I see next but a panther with enormous whiskers. During the storm he had climbed up a *pakur* tree on the village ghat on the other side of the river. In the violent wind the tree broke and fell into the Padma. Brother Panther came floating down on the current, rolled over and over in the water and reached and climbed the bank on my side. As soon as I saw him I made a *noose* in my tow-rope. The wild beast drew near, his big eyes glaring. He had grown very hungry with swimming, and when he saw me saliva dribbled from his red, lolling tongue. But though he had known many other men, inside and out, he did not know Abdul. I shouted to him, "Come on old boy", and as soon as he raised his forefeet for the attack I dropped my noose round his neck. The more he struggled to get free the tighter grew the noose, until his tongue began to loll out ...." I am tremendously excited. "He didn't die, did he Abdul?" I ask. "Die?" says Abdul, "He couldn't die for the life of him! Well, the river was in spate, and I had to get back to Bahadurganj. I yoked my young panther to the dinghy and made him tow me fully forty miles. Oh, he might roar and

snarl, but I goaded him on with my oar, and he carried me a ten or fifteen hours' journey in an hour and a half! Now, my little fellow, don't ask me what happened next, for you won't get an answer."

"All right," say I, "so much for the panther; now for the crocodile?"

Says Abdul, "I have often seen the tip of his nose above the water. And how wickedly he smiles as he lies basking in the sun, stretched at full length on the shelving sandbanks of the river. If I'd had a gun I should have made his acquaintance. But my license has expired ....

"Still, I can tell you one good yarn. One day Kanchi the gypsy woman was sitting on the bank of the river trimming bamboo with a bill-hook, with her young goat tethered near by. All at once the crocodile appeared on the surface, seized the billy-goat by the leg and dragged it into the water. With one jump the gypsy woman landed astride on its back, and began sawing with her sickle at the throat of the "demon – lizard", over and over again. The beast let go of the goat and plunged into the water ...."

"And then? And then?" comes my excited question. "Why," says Abdul, "the rest of the story went down to the bottom of the river with the crocodile. It will take some time to get it up again. Before I see you again I will send somebody to find out about it, and let you know." Abdul has never come again; perhaps he is still looking for news.

So much, then, for my travels in the palanquin. Outside the palanquin there were days when I assumed the role of teacher, and the railings of the verandah were my pupils. They were all afraid of me, and would cower before me in silence. Some of them were very naughty, and cared absolutely nothing for their books. I told them with dire threats that when they grew up they would be fit for nothing but casual labour. They bore the marks of my heatings from head to foot, yet they did not stop being naughty. For it would not have done for them to stop, it would have made an end of my game.

There was another game too, with my wooden lion. I heard stories of poojah sacrifices and decided that a lion sacrifice would be a magnificent thing. I rained blows on his back - with a frail little stick. There had to be a "mantra", of course, otherwise it would not have been a proper poojah:

"Liony, liony, off with your head,

Liony, liony, now you are dead.

Woofle the walnut goes clappety clap,

Snip, snop, SNAP!"

I had borrowed almost every word in this from other sources; only the word walnut was my own. I was very fond of walnuts. From the words "clappety clap" you can see that my sacrificial knife was made of wood. And the word "snap" shows that it was not a strong one.

III

THE clouds have had no rest since yesterday evening. The rain is pouting incessantly. The trees stand huddled together in a seemingly foolish manner; the birds are silent. I call to mind the evenings of my boyhood.

We used then to spend our evening in the servants' quarters. At that time English spellings and meanings did not yet lie like a nightmare on my shoulders. .My third brother used to say that I ought first to get a good foundation of Bengali and only afterwards to go on to the English superstructure. Consequently, while other schoolboys of my age were glibly reciting "1 am up", "He is down", I had not even started on B, A, D, bad and M, A, D, mad.

In the speech of the nabobs the servants' quarters were then called "tosha-khana". Even though our house had fallen far below its former aristocratic state, these old high-sounding names, "tosha-khana", "daftar-khana", "baithak-khana", still clung to it.

On the southern side of this "tosha-khana", a castor oil lamp burned dimly on a glass stand in a big room; on the wall was a picture of Ganesh and a crude country painting of the goddess Kali, round which the wall lizards hunted their insect prey. There was no furniture in the room, merely a soiled mat spread on the floor.

You must understand that we lived like poor people, and were consequently saved the trouble of keeping a good stable. Away in a corner outside, in a thatched shed under a tamarind tree, was a shabby carriage and an old horse. We wore the very simplest and plainest clothes, and it was a long time before we even began to wear socks. It was luxury beyond our wildest dreams when our tiffin rations went beyond Brajeswar's inventory and included a loaf of bread, and butter wrapped in a banana leaf. We adapted ourselves easily to the broken wrecks of our former glory.

Brajeswar was the name of the servant who presided over our mat seat. His hair and beard were grizzled, the skin of his face dry and tightdrawn; he was a man of serious disposition, harsh voice, and deliberately mouthed speech. His former master had been a prosperous and wellknown man, yet necessity had degraded him from that service to the work of looking after neglected children like us. I have heard that he used to be a master in a village school. To the end of his life he kept this schoolmasterly language and prim manner. Instead of saying "The gentlemen are waiting", he would say "They await you", and his masters smiled when they heard him. He was as finicky about caste matters as he was conceited. When bathing he would go down into the tank and push back the oily surface water five or six times with his hands before taking a plunge. When he came out of the tank after his bath Brajeswar would edge his way through the garden in so gingerly a way that one would think he could only keep caste by avoiding all contact with this unclean world that God has made. He would talk very emphatically about what

1. March-April.
2. Nor- wester, a very common phenomenon in Bengal in the beginning of the hot weather.

was right and what was wrong in manners and behaviour. And besides, he held his head a little on one side, which made his words all the more impressive.

But with all this there was one flaw in his character as *guru.* He cherished secretly a suppressed greed for food. It was not his method to place a proper portion of food on our plates before the meal. Instead, when we sat down to eat he would take one luchi[1] at a time, and dangling it at a little distance ask, "Do you want any more?" We knew by the tone of his voice what answer he desired, and I usually said that I didn't want any. After that he never gave us an opportunity to change our minds. The milk bowls also had an irresistible attraction for him-an attraction which I never felt at all. In his room was a small wired foodsafe with shelves iii it. In it was a big brass bowl of milk, and *luchis* and vegetables on a wooden platter. Outside the wire-netting the cat prowled longingly to and fro sniffing the air.

From my childhood upwards these short commons suited me very well. Small rations cannot be said to have made me weak. I was, if anything, stronger, certainly not weaker, than boys who had unlimited food. My constitution was so abominably sound that even when the most urgent need arose for avoiding school, I could never make myself ill by fair means or foul. I would get wet through shoes, stockings and all, but I could not catch cold. I would lie on the open roof in the heavy autumn dew; my hair and clothes would be soaked, but I never had the slightest suspicion of a cough. And as for that sign of bad digestion known as stomachache, my stomach was a complete stranger to it, though my tongue made use of its name with mother in time of need. Mother would smile to herself and not feel the least anxiety; she would merely call the servant and tell him to go and tell my teacher that he should not teach me that evening. Our old-fashioned mothers used to think it no great harm if the boys occasionally took a holiday from study. If we had fallen into the hands of these present-day mothers, we should certainly have been sent to the teacher, and had our ears tweaked into the bargain. Perhaps with a knowing smile they would have dosed us with castor oil, and our pains would have been permanently cured. If by chance I got a slight temperature no one ever called it fever, but "heated blood". I had never set eyes on a thermometer in those days. Dr. Nilmadhav would come and place his hand on my body, and then prescribe as the first day's treatment castor oil and fasting. I was allowed very little water to drink, and what I had was hot, with a few sugar-coated cardamoms for flavouring. After this fast, the *mourala fish soup* and soft-boiled rice which I got on the third day seemed a veritable food for the gods.

Serious fever I do not remember, and I never heard the name of malaria. I do not remember quinine - that castor oil was my most distasteful medicine. I never knew the slightest scratch of a surgeon's knife; and to this very day I do not know what measles and chicken-pox are. In short, my body remained obstinately healthy. If mothers want their children to be so healthy that they will be unable to escape from the school master, I recommended them to find a servant like Brajeswar. He would save not only food bills but doctor's bills also, especially in these days of mill flour and adulterated ghee and oil. You must remember that in those days chocolate was still unknown in the bazaar. There was a kind of rose lollipop to be had for a pice. I do not know whether modern boy's pockets are still made sticky by this sesamum-covered sugar-lump, with its faint. scent of roses. It has certainly fled in shame from the houses of the respectable people of to-day. What has become of those coneshaped packets of fried spices? And those cheap sesamum sweetmeats? Do they still linger on? If not, it is no good trying to bring them back.

Day after day, in the evenings, I listened to Brajeswar reciting the seven cantos of Krittibas' *Ramayana.* Kishori Chatterjee used to drop in sometimes while the reading was going on. He had by hart panchali[1] versions of the whole *Ramayana,* tune and all. He took possession at once of the seat of authority, and superseding Krittibas, would begin to recite his simple folk-stanzas in great style:

"Lakshman O hear me

Greatly I fear me

Dangers are near me."

There was a smile on his lips, his bald head gleamed, the song poured from his throat in a torrent of sound, the rhymes jingled and rang verse after verse, like the music of pebbles in a brook. At the same time he would be using his hands and feet in acting out the thought. It was Kishori Chatteriee's greatest grief that Dadabhai, as he called me, could not join a troupe of strolling players and turn such a voice to account. If I did that, he said, I should certainly make my name.

By and by it would grow late and the assembly on the mat would break up. We would go into the house, to Mother's room, haunted and oppressed on our way by the terror of devils. Mother would be playing cards with her aunt, the inlaid parquet floor gleamed like ivory, a coverlet was spread on the big divan. We would make such a disturbance that Mother would soon throw down her hand and say, "If they are going to be such a nuisance, auntie, you'd better go and tell them stories." We would wash our feet with water from the pot on the verandah outside, and climb on to the bed, pulling "Didima" with us. Then it would begin stories of the magical awakening of the princess and her rescue from the demon city. The princess might wake, but who could waken me?... In the early part of the night the jackals would begin to howl, for in those days they still haunted the basements of some of the old houses of Calcutta with their nightly wail.

IV

WHEN I was a little boy Calcutta city was not so wakeful at night as it is now. Nowadays, as soon as the day of sunlight is over, the day of electric light begins. There is not much work done in it, but there is no rest, for the fire continues, as it were, to smoulder in the charcoal after the blazing wood has burnt itself out. The oil mills are still, the steamer sirens

are silent, the labourers have left the factories, the buffaloes which pull the carts of jute bales are stabled in the tin - roofed sheds. But the nerves of the city are throbbing still with the fever of thought which has burned all day in her brain. Buying and selling go on as by day in the shops that line the streets, though the fire is a little choked with ash. Motors continue to run in all directions, emitting all kinds of raucous grunts and groans, though they no longer run with the zest of the morning. But in those old times which we knew, when the day was over whatever business remained undone wrapped itself up in the black blanket of the night and went to sleep in the darkened ground-floor premises of the city. Outside the house the evening sky rose quiet and mysterious. It was so still that we could hear, even in our own street, the shouts of the grooms from the carriages of those people of fashion who were returning from taking the air in Eden Gardens by the side of the Ganges.

In the hot season of *Chaitra* and *Vaishakh* the hawkers would go about the streets shouting "I-i-i-ce". In a big pot full of lumps of ice and salt water were little tin containers of what we called "kulfi" ice nowadays ousted by the more fashionable ices or "ice-cream". No one but myself knows how my mind thrilled to that cry as I stood on the verandah facing the street. Then there was another cry, "Bela flowers". Nowadays for some reason one hears little of the gardeners baskets of spring flowers - I do not know why. But in those days the air was full of the scent of the thickly strung *bel* flowers which the women and girls wore in their hairknots. Before they went to bathe the women would sit outside their rooms with a hand-mirror set up before them, and dress their hair. The knot would be skilfully bound with the black hair-braid into all sorts of different styles. They wore black-bordered Chandernagore saries, skilfully crinkled before use by pleating and twisting after the fashion of those days. The barber's wife would come to scrub their feet with pumice and paint them with red lac. She and her like were the gossipmongers of the women's courts.

The crowds returning from office or from college did not then, as they do now, rush to the football fields, clinging in swarms to the footboards of the trams. Nor did they crowd in front of cinema halls as they returned. There was some active interest shown in drama, but alas! I was only a child then.

Children of those times got no share in the pleasures of the grownups, even from a distance. If we were bold enough to go near, we should be told, "Off with you, go and play." But if we boys made the amount of noise appropriate for proper play, it would then be, "Be quiet, do." Not that the grownups themselves conducted their pleasures and conversation in silence, by any means; and now and again we would stand on the fringe of their far-flung jubilations, as though sprinkled by the spray of a waterfall. We would hang over the verandah on our side of the courtyard, staring across at the brilliantly lit reception-room on the other side. Big coaches would roll up to the portico one after another. Some of our elder brothers conducted the guests upstairs from the front door, sprinkling them with rose-water from the sprinkler, and giving each one a small buttonhole or nosegay of flowers. As the dramatic entertainment proceeded, we could hear the sobs of the "highcaste *kulin* heroine", but we could make out nothing of their meaning, and our longing to know grew intense. We discovered later that though the sobber was certainly highcaste, "she" was merely our own brother-in law. But in those days grown-ups and children were kept apart as strictly as men and women with their separate apartments. The singing and dancing would go on in the blaze of the drawing-room chandeliers, the men would pull at the hookah, the women of the family would take their betel boxes and sit in the subdued light behind their screen, the visiting ladies would gather in these retired nooks, and there would be much whispering of intimate domestic gossip. But we children were in bed by this time, and lay listening as our maid-servants Piyari or Sankari told us stories - "In the moonlight, expanding like an opening flower..."

V

A LITTLE before our day it was the fashion among wealthy householders to run *jatras* or troupes of actors. There was a great demand for boys with shrill voices to join these troupes. One of my uncles was patron of such an amateur company. He had a gift for writing plays, and was very enthusiastic about training the boys. All over Bengal professional companies were the rage, just as the amateur companies were in aristocratic circles. Troupes of players sprang up like mushrooms on all sides, under the leadership of some well-known actor or other. Not that either patron or manager was necessarily of high family or good education. Their fame rested on their own merits. *Jatra* performances used to take place in our house from time to time. But we children had no part in them, and I managed to see only the preliminaries. The verandah would be full of members of the company, the air full of tobacco smoke. There were the boys, long-haired, with dark rings of weariness under their eyes, and, young as they were, with the faces of grown men. Their lips were stained black with constant betel chewing. Their costumes and other paraphernalia were in painted tin boxes. The entrance door was open, people swarmed like ants into the courtyard, which, filled to the brim with the seething, buzzing mass, spilled over into the lane and beyond into the Chitpore Road. Then nine o'clock would strike, and Shyam would swoop down on me like a hawk on a dove, grip my elbow with his rough, gnarled hand, and tell me that Mother was calling me to go to bed. I would hang my head in confusion at being thus publicly dragged away, but would bow to superior force and go to my bedroom. Outside all was tumult and shouting, outside flared the lighted chandeliers, but in my room there was not a sound and a brass lamp burned low on its stand. Even in sleep I was dimly conscious of the crash of the cymbals marking the rhythm of the dance.

The grown-tips usually forbade everything on principle, but on one occasion for some reason or other they decided to be indulgent, and the order went forth that the children

also might come to the play. It was a drama about Nala and Damayanti. Before it began we were sent to bed till half-past eleven. We were assured again and again that when the time came we should be roused, but we knew the ways of the grownups, and we had no faith at all in these promises—they were adults, and we were children!

That night, however, I did drag my unwilling body to bed. For one thing, Mother promised that she herself would come and wake me. For another thing, I always had to pinch myself to keep myself awake after nine o'clock. When the time came I was awakened and brought outside, blinking and bewildered in the dazzling glare. Light streamed brightly from coloured chandeliers on the first and second storeys, and the white sheets spread in the courtyard made it seem much bigger than usual. On one side were seated the people of importance, senior members of the family, and their invited guests. The remaining space was filled with a motley crowed of all who cared to come. The performing company was led by a famous actor wearing a gold chain across his stomach, and old and young crowded together in the audience. The majority of the audience were what the respectable would call "riff-raff". The play itself had been written by men whose hands were trained only to the villager's reed pen; and who had never practised on the letters of an English copy book. Tunes, dances, and story had all sprung from the very heart of rural Bengal, and no pundit had polished their style.

We went and sat by our elder brothers in the audience, and they tied up small sums of money in kerchiefs and gave them to us. It was the custom to throw this money on to the stage at the points where applause was most deserved. By this means the actors gained some extra profit and the family a good reputation.

The night came to an end, but the play would not. I never knew whose arms gathered up my limp body, nor where they carried me. I was far too much ashamed to try to find out. I, a fellow who had been sitting like an equal among the grown-ups and doling out baksheesh, to be disgraced in this way before a whole courtyard full of people! When I woke up I was lying on the divan in my mother's room; it was very late, and already blazing hot. The sun had risen, but I had not risen!-Such a thing had never happened before.

Nowadays the city's pleasures flow on in an unbroken stream. There is always a cinema show somewhere, and whoever pleases may see it for a trifling sum. But in those days entertainments were few and far between, like water holes dug in the sandy bed of a dried up river, three or four miles apart.

Like these too they lasted only a few hours, and the wayfarers hastily gathered round, drinking from their cupped hands to quench their thirst.

The old days were like a king's son who, from time to time on festive occasions, or according to his whim, distributes rich and royal gifts to all within his jurisdiction. Modern days are like a merchant's son, sitting at the cross-roads on some great highway with many kinds of cheap and tawdry goods spread glittering before him, and drawing his customers by highway and byway from every side.

VI

BRAJESWAR was the head-servant, and his second-in-command was called Shyam. He came from Jessore, and he was a real countryman, speaking in a dialect strange to Calcutta. He would say "tenara" and "onara" for "tara" and "ora", "jati" and "khati" for "jete" and "khete". He used to call us affectionately "Domani". He had a dark skin, big eyes, long hair glistening with oil, and a strong, well-built body. He was really good at heart, and affectionate and kind to children. He used to tell us stories of dacoits. Dacoity stories filled men's houses then as universally as the fear of ghosts filled their minds. Even today dacoity is not uncommon; murder, assault and looting still take place, and the police still do not catch the right man. But nowadays this is only a newsitem, it has none of the fascination of romance. In those days dacoities were woven into stories, and passed from mouth to mouth for long periods. In my childhood men were still to be met with who in their prime had been members of dacoit gangs. They were all past-masters in the science of the *lathi*, and were surrounded by disciples eager to learn the art of single-stick. Men salaamed at the very mention of their names. Dacoity then was usually not a mere matter of rash, headstrong bloodshed. As bodily strength and skill played their part, so did a generous, gallant mind. Moreover, gentlemen's houses often contained an exercise-ground for the practice of *lathi*-fighting, and those who made a name on these grounds were acknowledged as masters even by dacoits, who gave them a wide berth. Many zamindars made a profession of dacoity. There was a story of a man of this class who had stationed his desperadoes at the mouth of a river. It was new moon, and poojah night, and when they returned, carrying a severed head to the temple in honour of Kali Kankali[1], the zemindar clapped his hands to his head and cried out, "What have you done? It's my son-in-law!"

We heard also about the exploits of the dacoits Raghu and Bishu. They used to give notice before they attacked, and there was nothing underhand in their dacoity. When their rallying-cry was heard in the distane, the blood of the villagers ran cold. But their code forbade them to lay hands on women. On one occasion, in fact, a woman even succeeded in "robbing the robbers", by appearing to them dressed as Kali, brandishing the goddess's heavy curved blade, and claiming their devout offerings.

One day there was a display of dacoits' wrestling feats in our house. They were all strong young fellows, big-made, dark-skinned, and longhaired. One man tied a cloth round a heavy grain-pounder, seized the cloth in his teeth, and then flung the pounder upwards and backwards over his shoulder. Another got a man to grasp him by his shaggy hair, and then whirled him round and round by a mere turn of his head. Using a long pole as support and lever, they leaped up to the

second storey. Then one man stood with his hands clasped above his bent head, and others shot through the aperture like diving birds. They also showed how it was possible for them to manage a dacoity twenty or thirty miles away, and the same night be found sleeping peacefully in their beds like law abiding citizens. They had a pair of very long poles with a piece of wood lashed cross-wise in the middle of each as a foot-rest. These poles were called *rang*-pa (stilts). When walking with the tops of the poles held in the hands, and the feet on these footholds, one stride had the value of ten ordinary steps, and a man could run faster than a horse. I used to encourage boys at Santiniketan to practise stilt-walking-though without any idea of committing dacoity! My imagination mingled such pictures of dacoity feats with Shyam's stories with gruesome effect, so that I have often spent the evening with my arms huddled against my pounding heart!

Sunday was a holiday. On the previous evening the crickets were chirping in the thickets outside in the south garden, and the story was about Raghu the highwayman. My heart went pit-a-pit in the dim light and flickering shadows of the room. The next day in my holiday leisure I climbed into the palanquin. It began to move unbidden, its destination unknown, and my mind, enthralled still by the magic of the previous night's romance, knew a thrill of delicious fear. In the silent darkness my pulses attuned themselves to the rhythmic shouts of the bearers, and my body grew numb with terrified anticipation.

On the boundless expanse of plain the air quivers in the heat, in the distance glistens the Kali tank; the sand sparkles, the wide-spreading *pakur* tree leans from the bank of the river over the cracked, ruined *ghat.* My romance-fed terrors are concentrated on that thick clump of reeds, and in the shade of the tree on that unknown plain. Nearer and nearer we approach, quicker and quicker beats my heart. Above the reeds can be seen the tips of one or two stout bamboo staves. The bearers will stop there to change shoulders. They will drink, and wind wet towels round their heads. And then?..

Then with a blood-curdling shout, the dacoits are upon us ....

VII

FROM morning till night the mills of learning went on grinding. To Wind up this creaking machinery was the work of *Shejadada*[1], Hemendranath. He was a stern taskmaster, but it is useless now to try to hide the fact that the greater part of the cargo with which he sought to load our minds was tipped out of the boat and sent to the bottom. My learning at any rate was a profitless cargo. If one seeks to key an instrument to too high a pitch, the strings will snap beneath the strain.

Shejadada made all arrangements for the education of his eldest daughter. When the time came he got her admitted into the Loreto Convent School, but even before that she had been given a foundation in Bengali. He also gave Protibha a thorough training in western music, which, however, did not cause her to lose her skill in Indian music. Among the gentlemen's families of that time she had no equal in Hindustani songs.

It is one merit of western music that its scales and exercises demand diligent practice, that it makes for a sensitive ear, and that the discipline of the piano allows of no slackness in the matter of rhythm.

Meanwhile she had learnt Indian music from her earliest years from our teacher Vishnu. In this school of music I also had to be entered. No present-day musician, whether famous or obscure, would have consented to touch the kind of songs with which Vishnu initiated us. They were the very commonest kind of Bengali folk songs. Let me give you a few examples:

"A gypsy lass is come to town
To paint tattoos, my sister.
The painting's nothing, so they tell,
Yet she on me has cast a spell,
And makes me weep and mocks me well,
By her tattoos, my sister."

I remember also a few fragmentary lines, such as:

"The sun and moon have owned defeat,
the firefly's lamp lights up the stage;
the Moghul and the Pathan flag,
the weaver reads the Persian page."

and:

"Your daugher-in-law is the plantain tree,
Mother of Ganesh, let her be.
For if but one flower should blossom and grow
She will have so many children you won't know what to do."

Lines too come back to me in which one can catch a glimpse of old forgotten histories:

"There was a jungle of thorn and burr,
Fit for the dogs alone;
There did he cut for himself a throne..."

The modern custom is first to practise scales-sa-re ga-ma, etc., on the harmonium, and then to teach some simple Hindu songs. But the wise supervisor who was then in charge of our studies understood that boyhood has its own childish needs, and that these simple Bengali words would come much more easily to Bengali children than Hindi speech. Besides this, the rhythm of this folk music defied all accompaniment by tabla. It danced itself into our very pulses. The experiment thus made showed that just as a child learns his first enjoyment

of literature from his mother's nursery rhymes, he learns his first enjoyment of music also from the same source.

The harmonium, that bane of Indian music, was not then in vogue. I practised my songs with my *tambura* resting on my shoulder, I did not subject myself to the slavery of the keyboard.

It was no one's fault but my own, that nothing could keep me for many days together in the beaten track of learning. I strayed at will, filling my wallet with whatever gleanings of knowledge I chanced upon. If I had been disposed to give my mind to my studies, the musicians of these days would have had no cause to slight my work. For I had plenty of opportunity. As long as my brother was in charge of my education, I repeated Brahmo songs with Vishnu in an absentminded fashion. When I felt so inclined I would sometimes hang about the doorway while *Shejadada* was practising, and pick up the song that was going on. Once he was singing to the *Behag* air, "O thou of slow and stately tread". Unobserved I listened and fixed the tune in my mind, anti astounded my mother-an easy task- by singing it to her that evening. Our family friend Srikantha Babu was absorbed in music day and night. He would sit on the verandah, rubbing chameli oil on his body before his bath, his *hookah* in his hand, and the fragrance of amber-scented tobacco rising into the air. He was always humming tunes, which attracted us boys around him. He never taught us songs, lie simply sang them to us, and we picked them up almost without knowing it. When he could no longer restrain his enthusiasm, he would stand up and dance, accompanying himself on the *sitar.* His big expressive eyes shone with enjoyment, he burst into the song, *Mai chhoro brajaki basari,* and would not rest content till 1 joined in too.

In matters of hospitality, people kept open house in those days. There was no need for a man to be intimately known before he was received. There was a bed to be hand at any time, and a plate of rice at the regular meal times for any who chanced to come. One day, for example, one such stranger guest, who carried his *tambura* wrapped in a quilt on his shoulder, opened his bundle, sat down, and stretched his legs at ease on one side of our reception room, and Kanai the *hookah*-tender offered him the customary courtesy of the *hookah.*

Pan, like tobacco, played a great part in the reception of guests. In those days the morning occupation of the women in the inner apartments consisted in preparing piles of *pan* for the use of those who visited the outer reception room. Deftly they placed the lime on the leaf, smeared catechu on it with a small stick, and putting in the appropriate amount of spice folded and secured it with a clove. This prepared pan was then piled into a brass container, and a moist piece of cloth, stained with catechu, acted as cover. Meanwhile, in the room under the staircase outside, the stir and bustle of preparing tobacco would be going on. In a big earthenware tub were balls of charcoal covered with ash, the pipes of the *hookahs* hung down like snakes of *Nagaloka*, with the scent of rosewater in their veins. This amber scent of tobacco was the first welcome extended by the household to those who climbed the steps to visit the house. Such was the invariable custom then prescribed for the fitting reception of guests. That overflowing bowl of pan has long since been discarded, and the caste of hookah-tenders have thrown off their liveries and taken to the sweetmeat shops, where they knead up threeday-old *sandesh* and refashion it for sale.

That unknown musician stayed for a few days, just as he chose. No one asked him any questions. At dawn I used to drag him from his mosquito curtains and make him sing to me. (Those who have no fancy for regular study revel in study that is irregular). The morning melody of *Bansi hamari* re ... would rise on the air.

After this, when I was a little older, a very great musician called Jadu Bhatta came and stayed in the house. He made one big mistake in being determined to teach me music, and consequently no teaching took place. Nevertheless, I did casually pick up from him a certain amount of stolen knowledge. I was very fond of the song Ruma *jhuma bardkhe aju badaraoa* ... which was set to a *Kafi* tune, and which remains to this day in my store of rainy season songs. But unfortunately just at this time another guest arrived without warning, who had a name as a tiger-killer. A Bengali tiger-killer was a real marvel in those days, and it followed that 1 remained captivated in his room for the greater part of the time. I realise clearly now what I never dreamed of then, that the tiger whose fell clutches he so thrillingly described could never have bitten him at all; perhaps he got the idea from the snarling jaws of the stuffed Museum tigers. But in those days I busied myself eagerly in the liberal provision of *pan* and tobacco for this hero, while the distant strains of *kanara* music fell faintly on my indifferent ears.

So much for music. In other studies the foundation provided by *shejadada* was equally generously laid. It was the fault of my own nature that no great matter came of it. It was with people like me in view that Ramprosad Sen wrote, "O Mind, you do not understand the art of cultivation."

With me, the work of cultivation never took place. But let me tell you of a few fields where the ploughing at least was done.

I got up while it was still dark and practised wrestling- on cold days I shivered and trembled with cold. In the city was a celebrated oneeyed *wrestler,* who gave me practice. On the north side of the outer room was an open space known as the "granary". The name clearly had survived from a time when the city had not yet completely crushed out all rural life, and a few open spaces still remained. When the life of the city was still young our granary had been filled with the whole year's store of grain, and the ryots who held their land on lease from us brought to it their appointed portion. It was here that the lean-to shed for wrestling was built against the compound wall. The ground had been prepared by digging and loosening the earth to a depth of about a cubit and pouring over it a maund of mustard oil. It was mere child's play for

the wrestler to try a fall with me there, but I would manage to get well smeared with dust by the end of the lesson, when I put on my shirt and went indoors.

Mother did not like to see me come in every morning so covered with dust-she feared that the colour of her son's skin would be darkened and spoiled. As a result, she occupied herself on holidays in scrubbing me. "(Fashionable housewives of today buy their toilet preparations in boxes from western shops; but then they used to make their unguent with their own hands. It contained almond paste, thickened cream, the rind of oranges and many other things which I forget. If only I had learnt and remembered the receipt, I might have set up a shop and sold it as "Begum Bilash" unguent, and made at least as much money as the *sandesh-wallahs.)* On Sunday mornings there was a great rubbing and scrubbing on the verandah, and I would begin to grow restless to get away. Incidentally a story used to go about among our school fellows that in our house babies were bathed in wine as soon as they were born, and that was the reason for our fair European complexions.

When I came in from the wrestling ground I saw a Medical College student waiting to teach me the lore of bones. A whole skeleton hung on the wall. It used to hang at night on the wall of our bedroom, and the bones swayed in the wind and rattled together. But the fear I might otherwise have felt had been overcome by constantly handling it, and by learning by heart the long, difficult names of the bones.

The clock in the porch struck seven. Master Nilkamal was a stickler for punctuality, there was no chance of a moment's variation. He had a thin, shrunken body, but his health was as good as his pupil's, and never once, unluckily for us, was he afflicted even by a headache. Taking my book and slate I sat down before the table, and he began to write figures on the blackboard in chalk. Everything was in Bengali, arithmetic, algebra and geometry in literature I jumped at one bound from *SitarBanabas*[1] to *Meghnadbadh Kabya*[2]. Along with this there was natural science. From time to time Sitanath Datta would come, and we acquired some superficial knowledge of science *by* experiments with familiar things. Once Heramba Tattvaratna, the Sanskrit scholar, came; and I began to learn the Mugdhabodh Sanskrit grammar by heart, though without understanding a word of it.

In this way, all through the morning, studies of all kinds were heaped upon me, but as the burden grew greater, my mind contrived to get rid of fragments of it; making a hole in the enveloping net, my parrot-learning slipped through its meshes and escaped-and the opinion that Master Nilkamal expressed of his pupil's intelligence was not of the kind to be made public.

In another part of the verandah is the old tailor, his thick-lensed spectacles on his nose, sitting bent over his sewing, and ever and anon, at the prescribed hours, going through the ritual of his Namaz[3]. I watch him and think what a lucky fellow Niamat is. Then, with my head in a whirl from doing sums, I shade my eyes with my slate, and looking down see in front of the entrance porch Chandrabhan the *durwan* combing his long beard with a wooden comb, dividing it in two and looping it round each ear. The assistant *durwan,* a slender boy, is sitting near by, a bracelet on his arm, and cutting tobacco. Over there the horse has already finished his morning allowance of gram, and the crows are hopping round pecking at the scattered grains. Our dog Johnny's sense of duty is aroused and he drives them away barking.

I had planted a custard-apple seed in the dust which continual sweeping had collected *in* one corner of the verandah. All agog with excitement, I watched for the sprouting of the new leaves. As soon as Master Nilkamal had gone, I had to run and examine it, and water it. In the end my hopes went unfulfilled-the same broom that had gathered the dust together dispersed it again to the four winds.

Now the sun climbs higher, and the slanting shadows cover only half the courtyard. The clock strikes nine. Govinda, short and dark, with a dirty yellow towel slung over his shoulder, takes me off to bathe me. Promptly at half past nine comes our monotonous, unvarying meal-the daily ration of rice, *dal* and fish curry-it was not much to my taste.

The clock strikes ten. From the main street is hard the hawker's cry of "Green Mangoes"-what wistful dreams it awakens! From further and further away resounds the cianging of the receding brass- peddler, striking his wares till they ring again. The lady of the neighbouring house in the lane is drying her hair on the roof, and her two little girls are playing with shells. They have plenty of leisure, for in those days girls were not obliged to go to school, and I used to think how fine it would have been to be born a girl. But as it is, the old horse draws me in the rickety carriage to my Andamans, in which from ten to four I am doomed to exile.

At half past four I return from school. The gymnastic master has come, and for about an hour I exercise my body on the parallel bars. He has no sooner gone than the drawing master arrives.

Gradually the rusty light of day fades away. The many blurred noises of the evening are heard as a dreamy hum resounding over the demon city of brick and mortar. In the study room an oil lamp is burning. Master Aghor has come and the English lesson begins. The black-covered reader is lying in wait for me on the table. The cover is loose; the pages are stained and a little torn; I have tried my hand at writing my name in English in it, in the wrong places, and all in capital letters. As I read I nod, then jerk myself awake again with a start, but miss far more than I read. When finally I tumble into bed I have at last a little time to call my own. And there I listen to endless stories of the king's son travelling over an endless, trackless plain.

VIII

WHEN I see the roofs of modern houses, uninhabited by either men or ghosts, I realise vividly the change that has

taken place between those times and these. I have already mentioned how the *brahma-daitya*[1] of the *badam* tree has fled, unable to endure the modern atmosphere of excessive learning. On the cornice where rumour had it that he had rested his foot, the crows snatch and squabble over our discarded mango stones. And men too restrict themselves nowadays to the confined, boxed-in rooms of the lower storeys, and pass their time within four walls. My mind goes back to the parapet-surrounded roof of the inner apartments. It is evening, and Mother has spread her mat and seated herself, with her friends gossiping round her. Their talk has no need of authentic information, it is only means of passing the time. There was then no regular supply of valuable and varied ingredients to fill the day, which was not, as now, a closely woven mesh, but like a net of loose texture, full of holes. And therefore, stories and rumours, laughter and jokes, all in the lightest vein, filled both the social gatherings of the men and the women's assemblies. Among Mother's friends the first in importance was Braja Acharji's sister, who was called "Acharjini". She was the daily purveyor of news to the company. Almost every day she picked up, (or made up!) and brought with her, every item of fantastic, ominous news in the country. By this means expenditure on all ceremonies calculated to avert impending calamity or the evil eye, was greatly increased.

Into this assembly I imported from time to time my recently acquired book-learning. I informed them that the sun is nine crores of miles distant from the earth. From the second part of my *Rju-Path I* recited a portion of *Valmiki's Ramayana* in the original complete with Sanskrit terminations. Mother was no judge of the accuracy of her son's pronunciation, but the range of his learning filled her with awe, and seemed to her far to outrun the nine-crone miles journey of light. Who would have thought that any except Naradmuni himself could recite all these *slokas*?

This inner apartment roof was entirely the women's domain, and had a close connection with the store room. The sun's rays fell full upon it, so it was used for preparing lemons for pickle. The women used to sit there with brass vessels full of *kalai* paste, and while their hair was drying they made pulse-balls with their deft, quick fingers. The maidservants who had washed the soiled linen came here to spread it in the sun, for the *dhoby* had little work in those days. Green mangoes were cut in slices and dried into *amsi*. The mango juice was poured layer after layer into black stone moulds of all sizes and all patterns[1]. A pickle of young jack-fruit stood there to season in sun-warmed mustard oil. Catechu, scented with the fragrant screw-pine, would be prepared with great care.

I had a special reason for remembering this item. When my schoolmaster informed me that he had heard the fame of my family's screwpine catechu, it was not difficult to understand his meaning. What he had heard of, he wished to become acquainted with. So to preserve the good name of my family, I occasionally climbed secretly to the roof containing the screw-pine catechu, and-what shall I say? "Appropriated" a piece or two sounds better than "stole". For even kings and emperors may make "appropriations" when need arises, or indeed even if it does not, but vulgar "stealing" is punished by prison or impaling,.

In the pleasant sunlight of the cold weather it was the family tradition for the women to sit on the roof gossiping, driving off crows and passing the time of day. I was the only younger brother-in-law in the house, the guardian of my sister-in-law's "amsatta", and her friend arid ally in many other trival pursuits. I used to read to them from Bangadhipa *Parajaya*[1]. From time to time the duty of cutting up betel-nut would devolve on me. I could cut betel very finely. My sister-in-law would never admit that I had any other good quality, so much so that she even made me angry with God forgiving me such a faulty appearance. But she found no difficulty in speaking in exaggerated fashion of my skill in cutting betel. Therefore the work of betel-cutting used to go on at a fine pace. But for a long time now, for want of anyone to encourage me, the hand that was so killed in fine betel-cutting has perforce busied itself in other fine work.

Around all this women's work spread on the roof there lingered the aroma of village life. These occupations belonged to the days when there was a pounding-room in the house, when confectionery balls were made, where the maid-servants sat in the evening rolling on their thighs tile cotton wicks for the oil lamps, where invitations came from neighbours' houses to the ceremonies of the eighth day after birth. Modern children do not hear fairy stories from their mothers' lips, they read them for themselves in printed books. Pickles and chutney are bought from the Newmarket by the bottleful, each bottle corked and sealed with wax.

Another relic of a bygone village life was the *chandimandap*, the outer verandah where the school was held. Not only the boys of the house, but those of the neighbourhood, also, made there their first attempt to search letters on palm-leaves. I suppose that 1 too must have traced out my first laborious letters on that verandah, but I have no clear memory of the child I then was, who seems as far removed as the farthest planet of the solar system, and I possess no telescope which can bring him into view.

The first thing I remember about reading after this is the terrible story of Sandamarka Muni's school, and of the *avatar* Narasimha tearing the bowels of Hiranyakasipu; I think also that there was a lead-plate engraving of it in the same book- and I remember also reading a few *slokas of* Chanakya.

My chief holiday resort was the unfenced roof of the outer apartments. From my earliest childhood till I was grown up, many varied days were spent on that roof in many moods and thoughts. When my father was at home his room was on the second floor. How often I watched him at a distance, from my hiding place at the head of the staircase. The sun had not yet risen, and he sat on the roof silent as an image of white stone, his hands folded in his lap. From time to time he would leave home for long periods in the mountains, and then the journey to the roof held for me the joy of a voyage through the seven seas. Sitting on the familiar first floor

verandah I had daily watched through the railings the people going about the street. But to climb to that roof was to be raised beyond the swarming habitations of men. When I went on to the roof my mind strode proudly over prostrate Calcutta to where the last blue of the sky mingled with the last green of the earth; my eye fell on the roofs of countless houses, of all shapes and sizes, high and low, with the shaggy tops of trees between.

I would go up secretly to this roof, usually at midday. The midday hours have always held a fascination for me. They are like the night of the daytime, the time when the *Sannyasi* spirit in every boy makes him long to quit his familiar surroundings. I put my hand through the shutter and drew the bolt of the door. Right opposite the. door was a sofa, and 1 sat there in perfect bliss of solitude.

'The servants who acted as my warders had eaten their fill and become drowsy, and yawning and stretching had betaken themselves to sleep on their mats. The afternoon sunlight deepened into gold, and the kite rose screaming into the sky. The bangle-seller went crying his wares down the opposite lane. His sudden cry would penetrate to where the housewife lay with her loosened hair falling over her pillow, a maidservant would bring him in, and the old bangle-seller dexterously kneaded the tender fingers as he fitted on the glass bangles that took her fancy. The hushed pause of that old-world midday is now no more, and the hawkers of the silent time are heard no longer. The girl who in those days had married status, nowadays has still not attained it, she is learning her lessons in the second class. Perhaps the bangle-seller runs, pulling a rickshaw, down that very lane.

The roof was like what I imagined the deserts of my books to be, a sheer expanse of quivering haze. A hot wind ran panting across it, whirling up the dust, the blue of the sky paled above it. Moreover, in this roof desert there appeared an oasis. Nowadays the pipe water does not reach the upper floors, but then it ran even up to the second floor rooms. Like some young Livingstone of Bengal, alone and unaided, I secretly sought and found a new Niagara, the private bathroom. I would turn on the tap, and the water would run all over my body. I then took a sheet from the bed and dried myself, looking the picture of innocence.

Gradually the holiday drew towards its close, and four struck on the gateway clock. The face of the sky on Sunday evenings was always very ill-favoured. There fell across it the shadow of the coming Monday's gaping jaws, already swallowing it in dark eclipse. Below at last a search had been instituted for the boy who had given his guards the slip, for now it was tiffin time.. This part of the day was a red-letter time for Brajeswar. He was in charge of buying the tiffin. In those days the shopkeepers did not make thirty or forty per cent profit on the price of ghee, and in odour and flavour the tiffin was still unpoisoned. When we were lucky enough to get them, we lost no time in eating up our kochuri, *singara*, or even *alur dom*. But when the time carne round and Brijeswar, with his neck still further twisted, called to us, "Look *babu*, what I have brought you today", what was usually to be found in his cone of paper was merely a handful of fried groundnuts. It was not that I did not like this, but its attractiveness lay in its price. I never made the least objection, not even on the days when only sesamum *goja* came out of the palm-leaf wrapper.

The light of day begins to grow murky. Once more with a gloomy spirit, I make the round of the roof. I gaze down at the scene below, where a procession of geese has climbed out of the tank. People have begun to come and go again on the steps of the *ghat*, the shadow of the banyan tree lengthens across half the tank, the driver of a carriage and pair is yelling at the pedestrians in the street.

IX

IN this way the days passed monotonously on. School grabbed the best part of the day, and only fragments of time in the morning and evening slipped through its clutching fingers. As soon as I entered the classroom, the benches and tables forced themselves rudely of my attention, elbowing and jostling their way into my mind. They were always the same-stiff, cramping, and dead. In the evening I went home, and the oil lamp in our study-room, like a stern signal, summoned me to the preparation of the next day's lessons. There is a kind of grass -hopper takes the colour of the withered leaves among which it lurks unobserved. In like manner my spirit also shrank and faded among those faded, drab-coloured days.

Now and again there came to our courtyard a mail with a dancing bear, or a snake charmer playing with his snakes. Now and again the visit of a juggler provided some little novelty. Today the drums of the juggler and snake-charmer no longer beat in our Chitpore Road. From afar they have salaamed to the cinema, and fled before it from the city. Games were few and of very ordinary kinds. We had marbles, we lead what is called "bat-ball," a very poor distant relation of cricket, and there were also top-spinning and kiteflying. All the games of the city children were of this same lazy kind. Football, with all its running and jumping about on a big field, was still in its overseas home. And so I was fenced in by the deadly sameness of the days, as though by an imprisoning hedge of lifeless, withered twigs.

In the midst of this monotony there played one day the flutes of festivity. A new bride carne to the house, slender gold bracelets on her delicate brown hands. In the twinkling of an eye the cramping fence was broken, and a new being came into view from the magic land beyond the bounds of the familiar. I circled around her at a safe distance, but I did not dare to go near. She was enthroned at the centre of affection, and I was only a neglected, insignificant child.

The house was then divided into two suites of rooms. The men lived in the outer, and the women in the inner apartments. The ways of the nabobs obtained there still. I remember how my elder sister was walking on the roof with the new bride at her side, and they were exchanging intimacies

freely. As soon as I tried to go near, however, I brought reprimand oil my head, for these quarters were outside the boundaries laid down for boys. I saw myself obliged to go back crest-fallen to my shabby retreat of former days.

The monsoon rain, rushing down suddenly from the distant mountains, undermines the ancient banks in a moment, and that is what happened now. The new mistress brought a new regime into the house. The quarters of the bride were in the room adjoining the roof of the inner suite. That roof was under her complete control. It was there that the leaf-plates were spread for the dolls' weddings. On such feast days, boy as I was, I became the guest of honour. My new sister-in-law could cook well, and enjoyed feeding people, and I was always ready to satisfy this craving for playing the hostess. As soon as I returned from school some delicacy made with her own hands stood ready for me. One day she gave me shrimp curry with yesterday's soaked rice, and a dash of chillies for flavouring, and I felt that I had nothing left to wish for. Sometimes when she went to stay with relatives and I did not see her slippers outside the door of her room, I would go in a temper and steal some valuable object from her room, and lay the foundation of a quarrel. When she returned and missed it, I had only to make such a remark as "Do you expect me to keep an eye on your room when you go away? Am I a watchman?" She would pretend to be angry and say, "You have no need to keep an eye on the room. Watch you own hands." Modern women will smile at the *na'vete* of their predecessors who knew how to entertain only their own brothers-in-law, and I dare say they are right. People today are much more grown-up in every way than they were then. Then we were all children alike, both young and old.

X

AND so began a new chapter of my lonely Bedouin life on the roof, and human company and friendship entered it. Across the roof kingdom a new wind blew, and a new season began there. My brother Jyotidada played a large part in this change. At that time my father finally left our home at Jorasanko. Jayotidada settled himself into that outside second-floor room, and I claimed a little corner of it for my own.

No *purdah* was observed in my sister-in-law's apartments. That will strike no one as strange today, but it then sounded an unimaginable depth of novelty. A long time even before that, when I was a baby, my second brother had returned from England to enter the Civil Service. When he went to Bombay to take up his first post he astonished the neighbourhood by taking off his wife with him before their very eyes. And as if it was not enough to take her away to a distant province, instead of leaving her in the family home, he made no provision for proper privacy on the journey. That was a terrible breach of propriety. Even the relatives felt as if the sky had fallen on their heads.

A style of dress suitable for going out was still not in vogue among women. It was this sister-in-law who first introduced the manner of wearing the *sari* and blouse which is now customary. Little girls had not then begun to wear frocks or let their hair hang in plaits-at least not in our family. The little ones used to wear the tight Rajput pyjamas instead of the traditional sari. When the Bethune School was first opened my eldest sister was quite young. She was one of the pioneers who made the road to education easy for girls. She was very fair, uniquely so for this country. I have heard that once when she was going to school in her palanquin the police detained her, thinking her in her Rajput dress to be an English girl who had been kidnapped.

I said before that in those days there was no bridge of intimacy between adults and children. Into the tangle of these old customs Jyotidada brought a vigorously original mind. I was twelve years younger than he, and that I should come to his notice in spite of such a difference in age is in itself surprising. What was more surprising is that in my talks with him he never called me impudent or snubbed me. Thanks to this, I never lacked courage to think for myself. Today I live with children, I try all kind of subjects of conversation, but I find them dumb. They hesitate to ask questions. They seem to me to belong to those old times when the grown-ups talked and the children remained silent. The self-confidence that doubts and questions is the mark of the children of the new age; those of the former age are known by a meek and docile acceptance of what they are told.

A piano appeared in the terrace room. There came also modern varnished furniture from Bowbazar. My breast swelled with pride, as the cheap grandeur of modem times was displayed before eyes inured to poverty. At this time the fountain of my song was unloosed. Jyotidada's hands would stray about the piano as he composed and rattled off tunes in various new styles, and he would keep me by his side as he did so. It was my work to fix the tunes which he composed so rapidly by setting words to them then and there.

At the end of the day a mat and pillow were spread on the terrace. Nearby was a thick garland of *bel* flowers on a silver plate, in a wet handkerchief, a glass of iced water on a saucer, and some *chhanchi pan* in a bowl. My sister-in-law would bathe, dress her hair and come and sit with us. Jyotidada would come out with a silk *chaddar* thrown thrown over his shoulders, and draw the bow across his violin, and I would sing in my clear treble voice. For providence had not yet taken away the gift of voice it had given me, and under the sunset sky my song rang out across the house-tops. The south wind came in great gusts from the distant sea, the sky filled with stars.

My sister-in-law turned the whole roof into a garden. She arranged rows of tall palms in barrels and beside and around them *chameli, gandharqj, rajanigandha, karabi* and *dolan-champa.* She considered not at all the possible damage to the roof-we were all alike unpractical visionaries.

Akshay Chaudhuri used to come almost every day. He himself knew that he had no voice, other people knew it even better. In spite of that nothing could stop the flow of his song. His special favourite was the *Behag* mode. He sang

with his eyes shut, so he did not see the expression on the faces of his hearers. As soon as anything capable of making a noise came to hand, he took it and turned it into a drum, beating it in happy absorption, biting his lips with his teeth in his earnestness. Even a book with a stiff binding would do very well. He was by nature a dreamy kind of man, one could see no difference between his working days and his holidays.

The evening party broke up, but I was a boy of nocturnal habits. All went to lie down, 1 alone would wander about all night with the *Brahma-daitya*. The whole district was steeped in silence. On moonlight nights the shadows of the lines of palm-trees on the terrace lay in dreampatterns on the floor. Beyond the terrace the top of the sishu tree swayed and tossed in the breeze, and its leaves gleamed as they caught the light. But for some reason, what caught my eye more than anything was a squat room with a sloping roof built over the staircase of the sleeping house on the opposite side of the lane. It stood like a finger pointing for ever towards I knew not what.

It may have been one or two in the morning, when in the main street in front a wailing chant arose- *Bolo-Hari Hari-bol.*

IT was the fashion then in every house to keep caged birds. I hated this, and the worst thing of all to me was the call of a *koel* imprisoned in a cage in some house in the neighbourhood. *Bouthakrun*[1] had acquired a Chinese shyama. From under its covering of cloth its sweet whistling rose continuously, a fountain of song. Besides this there were other birds of all kinds, and their cages hung in the west verandah. Every morning a bird-seed and insect hawker provided the birds' food. Grasshoppers came from his basket, and gram-flour for the grain-eating birds.

Jyotidada gave me proper answers in my difficulties, but as much could not be expected from the women. Once *Bouthakrun* took a fancy for keeping pet squirrels in cages. I said it wasn't right, and she told me not to set myself up to be her teacher. That could hardly be called a reasoned reply, and consequently, instead of wasting time in bickering, I privately set two of the little creatures free. After that too I had to listen to a certain amount of scolding, but I made no retort.

There was a permanent quarrel between us which was never made up, which was as follows.

There was a smart fellow called Umesh. He used to go the rounds of the English tailoring shops and buy up for an old song all their scraps, remnants and strips of many coloured silk, and make up women's garments from them with the addition of a bit of net and cheap lace. He would open his paper parcel and spread them carefully out before the eyes of the women, extolling them as "the very latest fashion". The women could not resist the attraction of such a mantra, but I disliked it all intensely. Again and again, unable to contain thyself, I made known my objections, but all the answer I got was "Don't be cheeky". I used to tell *Bouthakrun* that the old-fashioned black-bordered white saries, and the Dacca ones, were far better and more tasteful than these. I sometimes wonder, do modern brothers-in-law never open their mouths when they see their Boudidis robed in these modern georgette saries, with their faces painted like dolls? Even *Bouthakrun* decked out in Umesh's handiwork was not as bad as they are. Ladies then were at least not so guilty of forgery in dress or complexion.

I was however always beaten by *Bouthakrun in* argument, because she would never deign to give a logical answer; and I was beaten too in chess, in which she was an expert.

As I have referred to Jyotidada I ought to give a little more information about him, to make him better known. To do that I must go back to rather earlier days.

He had to go very often to Shelidah to see after the business of the zemindari. Once when he was travelling for this purpose he took me also with him.This was quite contrary to custom in those days, in fact it was what people would have called "altogether too much". He certainly considered that this travelling away from home was a kind of peripatetic schooling. He realised that my nature was attuned to ramblings in the open air, that in such surroundings it nourished itself spontaneously. A little later, when I was more mature, it was in Shelidah that my nature developed.

The old indigo factory was still standing, with the river Padma in the distance. The zemindari office was on the ground floor, and our living quarters on the upper floor. In front of them was a very large terrace. Beyond were tall casuarina trees; which had grown in stature with.the growing prosperity of the indigo-trading sahebs. Today the blustering shouts of the sahebs are completely silent. Where is now the indigo factory's steward, that "messenger of death"? Where the troop of bailiffs, loins girded up and lathis on shoulder? Where is the dining hall with its long tables, where the sahebs rode back from their business in the town and turned night into day? The feasting reached its height, the dancing couples whirled round the room, the blood coursed madly through the veins in the swelling intoxication of champagne-and the authorities never heard the appealing cries of the wretched ryots, whose weary journey took them only to the District Jail. All traces of those days have vanished, save one record alone-the two graves of two of the sahebs. The high casuarina trees bend and sway in the wind, and sometimes at midnight the grandsons and grand-daughters of the former ryots see the ghosts of the sahebs wandering in the deserted waste of garden.

Here I revelled in my solitude. I had a little corner room, and my days of ample leisure were spacious as the wide-spreading terrace. It was the leisure of a strange and unknown *region*, unfathomable as the dark waters of some ancient tank. The *bou-katha-kao*[1] calls incessantly, my fancy unweariedly takes wing. Meantime my note-book is gradually filled with verses. They were like the blossoms of the mango-tree's first flowering in the month of *Magh*, destined like them

to wither forgotten.

In those days if a young boy, or still more a young girl, laboriously counted out the fourteen syllables and wrote two lines of verse, the wise critics of the country used to hail it as a unique and unparalleled achievement.

I saw in the papers and magazines the names of these girl-poets, and their verses also were published. Nowadays these carefully constructed metres and crude rhyming platitudes have vanished along with the names of their authors, and the names of countless modern girls have appeared in their stead.

Boys are less bold and far more self-conscious than girls. I do not remember any young boy-poet writing verse in those days, except myself. My sister's son, who was older than I, explained to me one day that if one poured words into a fourteen-syllable mould, they would condense into verse. I soon tried this magic formula for myself. The lotus of poetry blossomed in no time in this fourteen -syllabled form and even the bees found a foothold on it. The gulf between me and the poets was bridged, and from that time on I have struggled to overtake them.

I remember how, when I was in the lowest class of the *chhatra britti*[1] our superintendent Govinda Babu heard a rumour that I wrote poetry. He thereupon ordered me to write, thinking that it would redound to the credit of the Normal School. "there was nothing for it but to write, to read my work before my class-mates, and to hear the verdict "this verse is assuredly stolen goods". The cynics of that day did not know that when I increased in worldly wisdom I should grow shrewd in stealing, not words but thoughts. Yet it is these stolen goods which are valuable.

I remember once composing a poem in the *Payarand Tripadi* metres, in which I lamented that as one swims to pluck the lotus it floats further and further away on the waves raised by one's own arms, and remains always out of reach. Akshay Babu took me round to the houses of his relatives and made me recite it to them. "The boy has certainly a gift for writing", they said.

Bouthakrun's attitude was just the opposite. She would never admit that I should ever make a success of writing. She would say mockingly that I should never be able to write like Bihari Chakravarti. I used to think despondently that even if I were placed in a far lower class than he, she would then be prevented from so disregarding her little poetbrother-in-law's disapprobation of women's fashions.

Jyotidada was very fond of riding. He actually took even *Bouthakrun* riding along Chitpore Road to the Eden Gardens. In Shelidah he gave me a pony, a beast that was no mean runner. He sent me to give the pony a run on the open *rath-tala* field-[2] I did as I was bidden, in continual imminent danger of a fall on that uneven ground. That I did not fall was solely because he was so determined that I should not do so. Shortly afterwards Jyotidada sent me out riding on the roads of Calcutta also.

Not on the pony, but on a high-spirited thoroughbred. One day it galloped straight in through the porch, with me on its back, to the courtyard where it was accustomed to be fed. From that day on 1 had nothing more to do with it.

I have referred elsewhere to the fact that Jyotidada was a practised shot. He was always eager for a tiger-hunt. One day the *shikari* Visvanath brought news that a tiger was living in the Shelidah jungle, and Jyotidada at once furbished up his gun and prepared for sport. Surprising to say, he took me with him. It never seemed to occur to hire that there could be any danger.

Visvanath was indeed an expert *shikari* He knew that there was nothing manly about hunting from a *machan* He would call the tiger out and shoot face to face, and he never missed his aim.

The jungle was dense, and in its lights and shadows the tiger refused to show himself. A rough kind of ladder was made by cutting footholds in a stout bamboo, and Jyotidada climbed up with his gun ready to hand. As for me, I was not even wearing slippers, I had not even that poor instrument with which to beat and humiliate the tiger. Visvanath signed to us to be on the alert, but for some time Jyotidada could not even see the tiger. After long straining of his bespectacled eyes he at last caught a glimpse of one of its markings in the thicket. He fired. By a lucky chance the shot pierced the animal's backbone, and it was unable to rise. It roared furiously, biting at all the sticks and twigs within reach, and lashing its tail. Thinking it over, I know that it is not in the nature of tigers to wait so long and patiently to be killed. I wonder if some one had had the forethought to mix a little opium with its feed on the previous night? Otherwise, why such sound sleep?

There was another occasion when a tiger came to the jungles of Shelidah. My brother and I set out on elephants to look for him. My elephant lurched majestically on, uprooting cane from the sugar-cane fields and munching as he went, so that it was like riding on an earthquake. The jungle lay ahead of us. He crushed the trees with his knees, pulled them up with his trunk and cast them to the ground. I had previously heard tales of terrible possibilities from Visvanath's brother Chamru, how sometimes the tiger leaps on to the elephant's back and clings there, digging in his claws. Then the elephant trumpeting with pain, rushes madly through the forest, and whoever is on his back is dashed against the trees till arms, legs and head are crushed out of all recognition. That day, as I sat my elephant, the image of myself thus being pounded to a jelly filled my imagination from first to last. For very shame I concealed my fear, and glanced from side to side in nonchalant fashion, as though to say, "Let me but catch a glimpse of the tiger, and them..." The elephant entered the densest part of the jungle, and coming to a certain place, suddenly stood stock-still. The mahout made no attempt to urge it forward. He had clearly more respect for the tiger's powers as a shikari than for my brother's. His great anxiety was undoubtedly that Jyotidada should so wound the tiger as to drive it to desperation. Suddenly the tiger leaped from the

jungle, swift as the thunder-charged storm from the cloud. We are accustomed to the sight of a cat, dog, or jackal, but here were shoulders of terrific bulk and power, yet no sense of heaviness in that perfectly proportioned strength. It crossed the open fields at a canter' in the full blaze of the midday sun. What loveliness, ease and speed of motion! The land was empty of crops; here indeed was a setting in which to feast one's eyes on the running tiger, this wide stretch of golden stubble drenched in the noonday sunlight.

There is one more story that may prove amusing. In Shelidah the gardener used to pluck flowers and arrange them in the vases. I took a fancy to write poetry with a pen dipped in the coloured essences of flowers. But the moisture that I could obtain by squeezing was not sufficient to wet the tip of my pen. I decided that it must be done by machinery. It would do, I thought, if I had a cup-shaped wooden sieve and a pestle revolving in it. It could be turned by an arrangement of ropes and pulleys. I made known my wants to Jyotidada.It may be that he smiled to himself, but he gave no outward sign. He issued instructions, and the carpenter brought wood. The machine was ready. I filled the wooden cup with flowers, but turn the ropes of the pestle as I would the flowers, merely turned to mud and not a drop of essence ran out.

Jyotidada saw that the essence of flowers was incompatible with the grinding of machinery, yet he never laughed at me.

This was the only occasion in my life on which I tried my hand at engineering. It is said in the *sastras* that there is a god who compasses the humiliation of those who ignore their own limitations. That god cast a mocking glance that day upon my engineering, and from that time I have not so much as laid hands on any kind of instrument, not even on a sitar or an *esraj*.

I described in my Reminiscences how Jyotidada went bankrupt in his attempt to run a *swadeshi* steamer company on the rivers of Bengal in competition with the Flotilla Company. Bouthakrun's death had taken place before then. Jyotidada gave up his rooms on the third storey and finally built himself a house on a hill at Ranchi.

XII

A NEW chapter in the life of the third storey room now opened, as I took up my abode there. Up to that time it had been merely one of my gypsy haunts, like the palanquin and the granary, and I roamed from one to another. But when *Bouthakrun* came a garden appeared on the roof, and in the room a piano was established. Its flow of new tunes symbolised the changed tenor of my life.

Jyotidada used to arrange to have his coffee in the mornings in the shade of the staircase room on the eastern side of the terrace. At such times he would read to us the first draft of some new play of his. From time to time I also would be called upon to add a few lines with my unpractised hand. The sun's rays gradually invaded the shade, the crows cried hoarsely to each other as they sat on the roof keeping an eye upon the bread-crumbs. By ten o'clock the patch of shade had dwindled away and the terrace grew hot.

At midday Jyotidada used to go down to the office on the ground floor. *Bouthakrun* peeled and cut fruit and arranged it carefully on a silver plate, along with a few sweetmeats made with her own hands, and strewed a few rose petals over it. In a tumbler was coconut milk or fruit- juice or *tal shans* (fresh palmyra kernels), cooled in ice. Then she covered it with a silk kerchief embroidered with flowers, put it on a Moradabad tray, and despatched it to the office at tiffin time, about one or two o'clock.

Just *then Bangadarshan*[1] was at the height of its fame, and *Suryamukhi* and *Kundanandini*[2] were familiar figures in every house. The whole country thought of nothing else but what had happened and what was gong to happen to the heroines.

When *Bangadarsan* came there was no midday nap for anyone in the neighbourhood. It was my good fortune not to have to snatch for it, for I had the gift of being an acceptable reader. *Bouthakrun* would rather listen to my reading aloud than read for herself. There were no electric fans then, but as I read I shared the benefits of *Bouthakarun's* hand fan.

XIII

Now and again Jyotidada used to go for change of air to a garden house on the bank of the Ganges. The Ganges shores had then not yet lost caste at the defiling touch of English commerce. Both shores alike were still the undisturbed haunt of birds, and the mechanised dragons of industry did not darken the light of heaven with the black breath of their upreared snouts.

My earliest memory of our life by the Ganges is of a small two storey house. The first rains had just fallen. Cloud shadows danced on the ripples of the stream, cloud shadows lay dark upon the jungles of the further shore. I had often composed songs of my own on such days, but that day I did not do so. The lines of Vidyapati came to my mind, *e bhara badara maha bhadara sunya mandira mor*[1] Moulding them to my own melody and stamping them with my own musical mood, I made them my own. The memory of that monsoon day, jewelled with that music on the Ganges shore, is still preserved in my treasury of rainy season songs. I see in memory the tree-tops struck ever and again by great gusts of wind, till their boughs and branches were tangled together in an ecstasy of play. The boats and dinghies raised their white sails and scudded before the gale, the waves leaped against the *ghat* with sharp, slapping sounds. *Bouthakrun* came back and I sang my song to her. She listened in silence and said no word of praise. I must then have been sixteen or seventeen years old. We used to have arguments even then about various matters, but no longer in the old spirit of childish wrangling.

A little while after we removed to Moran's Garden. That was a regular palace. The rooms, of varying heights, had

coloured glass in their windows, the floors were of marble, and steps led down from the long verandah to the very edge of the Ganges. Here a fit of wakefulness by night came upon *me,* and I used to pace to and fro, as I did later on the banks of the Sabarmati. That Garden is no longer in existence, the iron jaws of the Dundee Mills have crushed and swallowed it.

At the mention of Moran's Garden there comes back the memory of our occasional picnics under the *bakul* tree. The food owed its flavour not to spices but to the hands that prepared it. How I remember our sacred-thread ceremony, when we two boys were fed by *Bouthakrun* with the ceremonial rice and fresh ghee! For those three days we had our fill of tasty and savoury dishes.

It was a great annoyance to me that it was so difficult for me to fall ill. All the other boys in the house could manage it, and then they would enjoy *Bouthakrun's* personal care. Not only did they enjoy her care, but they took up all her time, and my own share of it was correspondingly diminished.

So came to an end that page of the history of the third storey, and with it *Bouthakrun* also passed away. After that the second floor became my own domain, but it was no longer as in the old days.

I have wandered in my story up to the very gateway of my young manhood. I must return to the territory of my boyhood once more.

Now I must give some account of my sixteenth year. At its very entrance stands *Bharati*[1] Nowadays the whole country seethes with the excitement of bringing out papers, and I can well understand the strength of that passion when I look back on my own madcap escapades. That a boy like me, with neither learning nor talents, should succeed in establishing himself in that *salon,* or at least in escaping reprimand there, shows what a youthful spirit was abroad everywhere. *Bangadarsan* was then the only magazine in the country controlled by a mature hand. As for ours, it was a medley of the mature and the crude. Badadada's contributions were as difficult to understand as they were to write; and side by side with them stood a story of mine, the raw verbosity of whose style I was too young to appraise, nor did others apparently possess the critical judgment to do so.

The time has come to say something of Badadada. Jyotidada held court in that third storey room, and Badadada in our south verandah. At one time he plunged into the deepest problems of metaphysics, far outside the range of our comprehension. There were few to listen to what he wrote and thought, and he would not lightly let any man go who showed himself willing to be audience. Nor would the man himself soon relinquish Badadada, but what he claimed from him was not alone the privilege of listening to metaphysics. One such man attached himself whose name I do not remember, but everyone called him "The Philosopher". My other brothers made great fun of him, not only about his love for mutton chops, but about his endless stream of varied and urgent necessities. Besides philosophy, Badadada then, began to take great interest in the construction of mathematical problems. The verandah would be full of papers, covered with figures, flying about in the south wind. Badadada could not sing, but he used to play an English flute, not for the sake of the music, but in order to measure mathematically the notes of each scale. After that he occupied himself for a time in writing *Svapna-Prayana.* To start with, he began to experiment in verse-making, weighing the sound-values of Sanskrit words in the scales of Bengali rhythm, and so creating new forms. Many of these attempts he retained, but many he threw away, and torn pages were scattered everywhere. After that he started to write his book of poems, but he rejected far more than he kept, for he was not easily satisfied with his work. We had not the sense to pick up and keep all these discarded lines. As he wrote he would read his work, and people would gather round him to listen. Our whole household was intoxicated with this wine of poetry. Sometimes in the midst of his reading he would burst into a great shout of laughter. His laughter was ample and generous as the skies, but woe beti de the man who sat within reach when the fit took him; he received slaps on the back to shake his very soul. The south verandah was the living fountain of the life of Jorasanko, but the fountain dried up when Badadada went to live at the Santiniketan *asrama.* I remember, however, times spent in the garden opposite that south verandah, when with mind made listless by the touch of the autumn sun I composed and sang a new song: "Today in the autumn sun, in my dreams of dawn, a nameless yearning fills my soul." I remember also a song made in the quivering heat of one blazing noon: "In this listless abandon of spirit, I know not what games I kept on playing with my own self."

Another striking thing about Badadada was his swimming. He would swim backwards and forwards across our tank at least fifty times. When he lived at Panihati Garden he used to swim far out into the Ganges. With his example before us we also learned to swim as boys. We started to learn by ourselves. We would wet our pyjamas and then pull them up tight so as to fill them with air. In the water they swelled out round our waists like balloons, and we could not possibly sink. When I was older and stayed or, the river-lands[1] of Shelidah, I once swam across the Padma. This was not as wonderful an achievement as it sounds. The Padma was full of alluvial islands which broke the force of its current, so that the feat was not worthy of any great respect. Still, it was certainly a story with which to impress others, and I have used it so many times. When I went as a boy to Dalhousie, my father never forbade me to wander about by myself. With an alpenstock in my hand I traversed the footpaths, climbing one hill after another. It was most amusing to scare myself with my own make-believe. Once while going steeply downhill I stepped on a heap of withered leaves at the foot of a tree. My foot slipped a little and I saved myself with my stick. But perhaps I might not have been able to stop myself! I wondered how long it would have taken to roll down the steep slope and fall into the waterfall far below. I described to Mother with picturesque inventiveness all that might have happened. Then, wandering in the deep pinewoods, I might

suddenly have come upon a bear that also was certainly something worth talking about. As nothing ever really happened I stored up all these imaginary adventures in my mind. The story of my swimming across the Padma was much of a piece with this class of romances.

When I was seventeen I had to leave the editorial board of *Bharati*, for it was then decided that 1 should go to England. Further it was considered that before sailing I should live with *Mejadada*[2] for a time to get some grounding in English manners. He was then a judge in Ahmedabad, and *Meja-Bouthakrun* and her children were in England, waiting for *Mejadada* to get a furlough and join them.

I was torn up by the roots and transplanted from one soil to another, and had to get acclimatised to a new mental atmosphere. At first my shyness was a stumbling-block at every turn. I wondered how I should keep my self-respect among all these new acquaintances. It was not easy to habituate myself to strange surroundings, yet there was no means of escape from them; in such a situation a boy of my temperament was bound to find his path a rough One.

My fancy, free to wander, conjured up pictures of the history of Ahmedabad in the Moghul period. The judge's quarters were in Shahibag, the former palace grounds of the Muslim kings. During the daytime *Mejadada* was away at his work, the vast house seemed one cavernous emptiness, and I wandered about all day like one possessed. In front was a wide terrace, which commanded a view of the Sabarmati river, whose knee-deep waters meandered along through the sands. I felt as though the stone-built tanks, scattered here and there along the terrace, held locked in their masonry wonderful secrets of the luxurious bathinghalls of the Begums.

We are Calcutta people, and history nowhere gives us any evidence of its past grandeur there. Our vision had been confined to the narrow boundaries of these stunted times. In Ahmedabad I felt for the first time that history had paused, and was standing with her face turned towards the aristocratic past. Her former days were buried in the earth like the treasure of the *yakshas.*[1] My mind received the first suggestion for the story of Hungry Stone;.

How many hundred years have passed since those times! Then in the *nahabat-khana,* the minstrel's gallery, an orchestra played day and night; choosing tunes appropriate to the eight periods of the day. The rhythmic. beat of horses' hoofs echoed on the streets, and great parades were held of the mounted Turkish cavalry, the sun glittering oil the points of their spears. In the court of the Padshah whispered conspiracies were ominously rife. Abyssinian eunuchs, with drawn swords, kept guard in, the inner apartments. Rose-water fountains played in the *hamams* of the Begums, the bangles tinkled on their arms. Today Shahibag stands silent, like a forgotten tale; all its colour has faded, and its varied sounds have died away; the splendours of the play are withered and the nights have lost their savour.

Only the bare skeleton of those old days remained, its head a naked skull whose crown. was gone. It was like a mummy in a museum, but it would be too much to say that my mind was able fully to re-clothe those dry bones with flesh and blood and restore the original form. Both the first rough model, and the background against which it stood, were largely a creation of the fancy. Such patch-work is easy when little is known and the rest has been forgotten. After these eighty years even the picture of myself that comes before me does not correspond line for line with the reality, but is largely a product of the imagination.

After I had stayed there for some time *Mejadada* decided that perhaps I should be less homesick if I could mix with women who could familiarise me with conditions abroad. It would also be an easy way to learn English. So for a while I lived with a Bombay family. One of the daughters of the house was a modern educated girl who had just returned with all the polish of a visit to England. My own attainments were only ordinary, and she could not have been blamed if she had ignored me. But she did not do so. Not having any store of book-learning to offer her, I took the first opportunity to tell her that I could write poetry. This was the only capital I had with which to gain attention. When I told her of my poetical gift, she did not receive it in any carping or dubious spirit, but accepted it without question.. She asked the poet to give her a special name, and I chose one for her which she thought very beautiful. I wanted that name to be entwined with the music of my verse, and I enshrined it in a poem which I made for her. She listened as I sang it in the *Bhairavi* mode of early dawn, and then said, "Poet, I think that even if I were on my death-bed your songs would call me back to life."There is an example of how well girls know how to show their appreciation by some pleasant exaggeration. They simply do it for the pleasure of pleasing. I remember that it was from her that I first heard praise of my personal appearance, - praise that was often very delicately given.

For example, she asked me once very particularly to remember one thing: "You must never wear a beard. Don't let anything hide the outline of your face". Everyone knows that I have not followed that advice. But she herself did not live to see my disobedienę proclaimed upon my face.

In some years, birds strange to Calcutta used to come and build in that banyan tree of ours. They would be off again almost before I had learnt to recognize the dance of their wings, but they brought with them a strangely lovely music from their distant jungle homes. So, in the course of our life's journey, some angel from a strange and unexpected quarter may cross our path, speaking the language of our own soul, and enlarging the boundaries of the heart's possessions. She comes unbidden, and when at last we call for her she is no longer there. But as she goes, she leaves on the drab web of our lives a border of embroidered flowers, and for ever and ever the night and day are for us enriched.

XIV

The Master-Workman, who made me, fashioned his first model from the native clay of Bengal. I have described this first model, which is what I call my boyhood, and in it there is little admixture of other elements. Most of its ingredients were gathered from within, though the atmosphere of the home and the home people counted for something too. Very often the work of moulding goes no further than this stage. Some people get hammered into shape in the book-learning factories, and these are considered in the market to be goods of a superior stamp.

It was my fortune to escape almost entirely the impress of these mills of learning. The masters and pundits who were charged with my education soon abandoned the thankless task. There was Jnanachandra Bhattacharya, the son of Anandachandra Vedantabagish, who was a B.A. He realised that this boy could never be driven along the beaten tract of learning. The teachers of those days, alas! were not so strongly convinced that boys should all be poured into the mould of degree-holding respectability. There was then no demand that rich and poor alike should all be confined within the fenced-off regions of college studies. Our family had no wealth then, but it had a reputation, so the old traditions held good, and they were indifferent to conventional academic success. From the lower classes of the Normal School we were transferred to De Cruz's Bengal Academy. it was the hope of my guardians that even if I got nothing else, I should get enough mastery of spoken English to save my face. In the Latin class I was deaf and dumb, and my exercise books of all kinds kept from beginning to end the unrelieved whiteness of a widow's cloth. Confronted by such unprecedented determination not to study, my class-teacher complained to Mr. De Cruz, who explained that we were not born for study, but for the purpose of paying our monthly fees. Jnana Babu was of a similar opinion, but found means of keeping me occupied nevertheless. He gave me the whole of *Kumarsambhava*[1] to learn by heart. He shut me in a room and gave me *Macbeth* to translate. Then Pundit Rainsarbaswa read *Sakuntala* with me. By setting me free in this way from the fixed curriculum, they reaped some reward for their labours. These then were the materials that formed my boyish mind, together with what other Bengali books I picked up at random.

I landed in England, and foreign workmanship began to play a part in the fashioning of my life. The result is what is known in chemistry as a compound. How capricious is Fortune!-I went to England for a regular course of study, and a desultory start was made, but it carne to nothing. *Meja-Bouthan* was there, and her children, and my own family circle absorbed nearly all my interest. I hung about around the school-room, a master taught me at the house, but I did not give my mind to it.

However, gradually the atmosphere of England made its impression on my mind, and what little I brought back from that country was from the people I came in contact with. Mr. Palit finally succeeded in getting me away from my own family. I went to live with a doctor's family, where they made me forget that I was in a foreign land. Mrs. Scott lavished on me a genuine affection, and cared for me like a mother. I had then been admitted to London University, and Henry Morley was teaching English literature. His teaching was no dry-as-dust exposition of dead books. Literature came to life in his mind and in the sound of his voice, it reached to our inner being where the soul seeks its nourishment, and nothing of its essential nature was lost. With his guidance, I found the study of the Clarendon Press books at home to be an easy matter and I took upon myself to be my own teacher. For no reason at all Mrs. Scott would sometimes fancy that I did not look well, and would become very worried about me. She did not know that the portals of sickness had been barred against me from childhood. I used to bathe every morning in ice-cold water-in fact, in the opinion of the doctors, it was almost a sacrilege that I should survive such flagrant disregard of the accepted rules!

I was able to study in the University for three months only, but I obtained almost all my understanding of English culture from personal contacts. The Artist who fashions us takes every opportunity to mingle new elements in his creation. Three months of close intimacy with English hearts sufficed for this development. Mrs. Scott made it my duty each evening till eleven o'clock to read aloud from poetic drama and history by turn. In this way I did a great deal of reading in a short space of time. It was not prescribed class study, and my understanding of human nature developed side by side with my knowledge of literature. I went to England but I did not become a barrister. I received no shock calculated to shatter the original framework of my life-rather East and West met in friendship in my own person. Thus it has been given me to realise in my own life the meaning of my name.'

1. The poet's name Rabi means the sun, which does not distinguish between East and West.

15

The Crescent Moon

15

The Crescent Moon

The Home

I PACED alone on the road across the field while the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.

The daylight sank deeper and deeper into the darkness, and the widowed land, whose harvest had been reaped, lay silent.

Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening.

His village home lay there at the end of the waste land, beyond the sugar-cane field, hidden among the shadows of the banana and the slender areca palm, the coconut and the dark green jack-fruit trees.

I stopped for a moment in my lonely way under the starlight, and saw spread before me the darkened earth surrounding with her arms countless homes furnished with cradles and beds, mothers' hearts and evening lamps, and young lives glad with a gladness that knows nothing of its value for the world.

On the Seashore

ON the seashore of endless worlds children meet. The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl-fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the senile of the sea-beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

The Source

THE sleep that flits on baby's eyes - does anybody knov from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two shy buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps - does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumour that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning -the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.

The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs — does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love - the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's lips.

Baby's Way

IF baby only wanted to, he could fly up to heaven this moment.

It is not for nothing that he does not leave us.

He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her.

Baby knows all manner of wise words, though few on earth can understand their meaning.

It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.

The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.

Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.

It is not for nothing he came in such a disguise.

This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss. It is not for nothing he has chosen to shed tears.

Though with the smile of his dear face he draws mother's

yearning heart to him, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and love.

The Unheeded Pageant

AH who was it coloured that little frock, my child, and covered your sweet limbs with that little red tunic?

You have come out in the morning to play in the courtyard, tottering and tumbling as you run.

But who was it coloured that little frock, my child?

What is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

Mother smiles at you standing on the threshold.

She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd.

But what is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

O beggar, what do you beg for, clinging to your mother's neck with both your hands?

O greedy heart, shall I pluck the world like a fruit from the sky to place it on your little rosy palm?

O beggar, what are you begging for?

The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.

The sun smiles and watches your toilet.

The sky watches over you when you sleep in your mother's arms, and the morning comes tiptoe to your bed and kisses your eyes.

The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.

The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky.

The world-mother keeps her seat by you in your mother's heart.

He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window with his flute.

And the fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky.

Sleep-Stealer

WHO stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Clasping her pitcher to her waist mother went to fetch water from the village near by.

It was noon. The children's playtime was over; the ducks in the pond were silent.

The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the banyan tree.

The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove.

In the meanwhile the Sleep-stealer came and, snatching sleep from baby's eyes, flew away.

When mother came back she found baby travelling the room over on all fours.

Who stole sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and chain her up.

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and scowling stones, trickles a tiny stream.

I must search in the drowsy shade of the *bakula* grove, where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry nights.

In the evening I will peep into the whispering silence of the bamboo forest, where fireflies squander their light, and will ask every creature I meet, "Can anybody tell me where the Sleep-stealer lives?

Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.

Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!

I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.

I would plunder it all, and carry it home.

I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and water-lilies.

When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will mockingly din her ears with:

"Whose sleep will you steal now?"

The Beginning

WHERE have I come from, where did you pick me up?" the baby asked its mother.

She answered, half crying, half laughing, and clasping the baby to her breast, -

"You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.

Your were in the dolls of my childhood's games; and when with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made and unmade you then.

You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.

In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my mother you have lived.

In the lap of the deathless Spirit who rules our home you have been nursed for ages.

When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it.

Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs, like a glow in the sky before the sunrise.

Heaven's first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.

As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.

For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine?"

Baby's World

I WISH I could take a quiet corner in the heart of my baby's very own world.

I know it has stars that talk to him, and a sky that stoops down to his face to amuse him" with its silly clouds and rainbows.

Those who make believe to be dumb, and look as if they never could move, come creeping to his window with their stories and with trays crowded with bright toys.

I wish I could travel by the road that crosses baby's mind, and out beyond all bounds; .

Where messengers run errands for no cause between the kingdoms of kings of no history;

Where Reason makes kites of her laws and flies them, and Truth sets Fact free from its fetters.

When and Why

WHEN I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints - when I give coloured toys to you, my child. When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth - when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice - when I baring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings to my body – when I kiss you to make you smile.

Defamation

WHY are those tears in your eyes, my child?

How horrid of them to be always scolding you for nothing!

You have stained your fingers and face with ink while writing - is that why they call you dirty?

O, fie! Would they dare to call the fill moon dirty because it has smudged its face with ink?

For every little trifle they blame you, my child. They are ready to find fault for nothing.

You tore your clothes while playing - is that why they call you untidy?

O, fie! What would they call an autumn morning that smiles through its ragged clouds?

Take no heed of what they say to you, my child.

They make a long list of your misdeeds.

Everybody knows how you love sweet things — is that why they call you greedy?

O, fie! What then would they call us who love you?

The Judge

SAY of him what you please, but I know my child's failings.

I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child.

How should you know how dear he can be when you try to weigh his merits against his faults?

When I must punish him lie becomes all the more a part of my being.

When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.

I alone have a right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves.

Playthings

CHILD, how happy you are sitting in the dust, playing with a broken twig all the morning!

I smile at your play with that little bit of a broken twig.

I am busy with my accounts, adding up figures by the hour.

Perhaps you glance at me and think, "What a stupid game to spoil your morning with!"

Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorbed in sticks and mudpies.

I seek out costly playthings, and gather lumps of gold and silver.

With whatever you find you create your glad games. I spend both my time and my strength over things I can never obtain.

In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire, and forget that I too am playing a game.

The Astronomer

I ONLY said, "When in the evening the round full moon gets entangled among the branches of that *Kadam* tree, couldn't somebody catch it?"

But dada' laughed at me and said, "Baby, you are the silliest child I have ever known. The moon is ever so far from us, how could anybody catch it?"

I said, "Dada, how foolish your are! When mother looks out of tier window and smiles down at us playing, would you call her far away?"

Still dada said, "You are a stupid child! But, baby, where could you find a net big enough to catch the moon with?"

I said, "Surely you could catch it with your hands." But dada laughed and said, "You are the silliest child I have known. If it came nearer, you would see how big the moon is."

I said, "Dada, what nonsense they teach at your school! When mother bends her face down to kiss us, does her face look very big?"

But still dada says, "You are a stupid child."

Clouds and Waves

MOTHER, the folk who live up in the clouds call out to me -

"We play from the time we wake till the day ends.

We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon."

I ask, "But how am I to get up to you?"

They answer, "Come to the edge of the earth, lift up your hand to the sky, and you will be taken into the clouds."

"My mother is waiting for me at home," I say. "How can I leave her and come?"

Then they smile and float away.

But I know a nicer game than that, mother.

I shall be the cloud and you the moon.

I shall cover you with both my hands, and our housetop will be the blue sky.

The folk who live in the waves call out to me -

"We sing from morning till night; on and on. we travel and know not where we pass."

I ask, "But how am I to join you?"

They tell me, "Come to the edge of the shore and stand with your eyes tight shut, and you will be carried out upon the waves."

I say, "My mother always wants me at home in the evening - how can I leave her and go?"

Then they smile, dance and pass by.

But I know a better game than that

I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.

I shall roll on and on and on, and break upon your lap with laughter.

And no one in the world will know where we both are.

The Champa Flower

SUPPOSING I became a *champa* flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother?

You would call, "Baby, where are you?" and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.

When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the champa tree to the little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.

When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading *Ramayana*, and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and yogi lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.

But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?

When in the evening you went to the cowshed with the lighted lamp in your hand, I should suddenly drop on to the

earth again and be your own baby once snore, and beg you to tell me a story.

"Where have you been, you naughty child?" "I won't tell you, mother. That's what you and I would say then.

Fairyland

IF people came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air.

The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining gold.

The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards, and she wears a jewel that cost all the wealth of seven kingdoms.

But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my king's palace is.

It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

The princess lies sleeping on the far-away shore of the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand, and jewels will fall from her lips when she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother; she is there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.

I sit in the corner where the shadows of the walls meet together.

Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she knows where the barber in the story lives.

But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.

It is at the corner of the terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

The Land of the Exile

MOTHER, the light has grown grey in the sky; I do not know what the time is.

There is no fun in my play, so I have come to you. It is Saturday, our holiday.

Leave off your work, mother; sit here by the window and tell me where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is.

The shadow of the rains has covered the day from end to end.

The fierce lightning is scratching the sky with its nails,

When the clouds rumble and it thunders, I love to be afraid in my heart and cling to you. .

When the heavy rain patters for hours on the bamboo leaves, and our windows shake and rattle at the gusts of wind, I like to sit alone in the room, mother, with you, and hear your talk about the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale.

Where is it, mother, on the shore of what sea, at the foot of what hills, in the kingdom of what king?

There are no hedges there to mark the fields, no footpath across it by which the villagers reach their village in the evening, or the woman who gathers dry sticks in the forest can being her load to the market. With patches of yellow grass in the sand and only one tree where the pair of wise old birds have their nest, lies the desert of Tepantar.

I can imagine how, on just such a cloudy day, the young son of the king is riding alone on a grey horse through the desert, in search of the princess who lies imprisoned in the giant's palace across that unknown water.

When the haze of the rain comes down in the distant sky, and lightning starts up like a sudden fit of pain, does he remember his unhappy mother, abandoned by the king, sweeping the cow-stall and wiping her eyes, while he rides through the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale?

See, mother, it is almost dark before the day is over and there are no travellers yonder on the village road.

The shepherd boy has gone home early from the pasture, and men have left their fields to sit on mats under the eaves of their huts, watching the scowling clouds.

Mother, I have left all my books on the shelf - do not ask me to do my lessons now.

When I grow up and am big like my father, I shall learn all that must be learnt.

But just for to-day, tell me, mother, where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is.

The Rainy Day

SULLEN clouds are gathering fast over the black fringe of the forest.

O child, do not go out!

The pain; trees in a row by the lake are smiting their heads against the dismal sky; the crows with their draggled wings are silent on the tamarind branches, and the eastern bank of the river is haunted by a deepening gloom.

Our cow is lowing loud, tied at the fence.

O child, wait here till I bring her into the stall.

Men have crowded into the flooded field to catch the fishes as they escape from the overflowing ponds; the rain-water is running in rills through the narrow lanes like a laughing boy who has run away from his mother to tease her.

Listen, someone is shouting for the boatman at the ford.

O child, the daylight is dim, and the crossing at the ferry is closed.

The sky seems to ride fast upon the madly rushing rain; the water in the river is loud and impatient; women have hastened home early from the Ganges .with their filled pitchers.

The evening lamps must be made ready.

O child, do not go out!

The road to the market is desolate, the lane to the river is slippery. The wind is roaring and struggling among the bamboo branches like a wild beast tangled in a net.

Paper Boats

DAY by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream. In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.

I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.

I load my little boats with *shiuli* flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night

I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.

I know trot what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!

When night comes I bury my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.

The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading is their baskets full of dreams.

The Sailor

THE boat of the boatman Madhu is moored at the wharf of Rajgunj.

It is uselessly laden with jute, and has been lying there idle for ever so long.

If he would only lend me his boat, I should man her with a hundred oars, and hoist sails, five or six or seven.

I should never steer her to stupid markets.

I should sail the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

But, mother, you won't weep for me in a corner.

I am not going into the forest like Ramachandra to come back only after fourteen years.

I shall become the prince of the story, and fill my boat with whatever I like.

I shall take my friend Ashu with me. We shall sail merrily across the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

We shall set sail in the early morning light.

When at noontide you are bathing at the pond, we shall be in the land of a strange king.

We shall pass the ford of Tirpurni, and leave behind us the desert of Tepantar.

When we come back it will be getting dark, and I shall tell you of all that we have seen.

I shall cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

The Further Bank

I LONG to go over there to the further bank of the river,

Where those boats are tied to the bamboo poles in a line;

Where men cross over in their boats in the morning with ploughs on their shoulders to till their far-away fields;

Where the cowherds make their lowing cattle swim across to the riverside pasture;

Whence they all come back home in the evening, leaving the jackals to howl in the island overgrown with weeds.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferry when I am grown up.

They say there are strange pools hidden behind that high bank.

Where flocks of wild ducks come when the rains are over, and thick reeds grow round the margins where water-birds lay their eggs;

Where snipes with their dancing tails stamp their tiny footprints upon the clean soft mud;

Where in the evening the tall grasses crested with white flowers invite the moonbeam to float upon their waves.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

I shall cross and cross back from bank to bank, and all the boys and girls of the village will wonder at me while they are bathing.

When the sun climbs the mid sky and morning wears on

to noon, I shall come running to you, saying, "Mother, I am hungry!"

When the day is done and the shadows cower under the trees, I shall come back in the dusk.

I shall never go away from you into the town to work like father.

Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferryboat when I am grown up.

The Flower-School

WHEN storm-clouds rumble in the sky and June showers come down,

The moist east wind comes marching over the heath to blow its bagpipes among the bamboos.

The crowds of flowers come out of a sudden, from nobody knows where, and dance upon the grass in wild glee.

Mother, I really think the flowers go to school underground.

They do their lessons with doors shut, and if they want to come out to play before it is time, their master makes them stand in a corner:

When the rains come they have their holidays.

Branches clash together in the forest, and the leaves rustle in the wild wind, the thunder-clouds clap their giant hands and the flower children rush out in dresses of pink and yellow and white.

Do you know, mother, their home is in the sky, where the stars are.

Haven't you seen how eager are to get there? Don't you know why they are in such a hurry?

Of course, I can guess to whom they raise their arms: they have their mother as I have my own.

The Merchant

IMAGINE, mother, that you are to stay at home and I am to travel into strange lands.

Imagine that my boat is ready at the landing fully laden.

Now think well, mother, before you say what I shall bring for you when I come back.

Mother, do you want heaps and heaps of gold?

There, by the banks of golden streams, fields are full of golden harvest

And in the shade of the forest path the golden champa flowers drop on the ground.

I will gather them all for you in many hundred baskets.

Mother, do you want pearls big as the raindrops of autumn?

I shall cross to the pearl island shore.

There in the early morning light pearls tremble on the meadow flowers, pearls drop on the grass, and pearls are scattered on the sand in spray by the wild sea-waves.

My brother shall have a pair of horses with wings to fly among the clouds.

For father I shall bring a magic pen that, without his knowing, will write of itself.

For you, mother, I must have the casket and jewel that cost seven kings their kingdoms.

Sympathy

IF I were only a little puppy, not your baby, mother dear, would you say "No" to me if I tried to eat from your dish?

Would you drive me off, saying to me, "Get away, you naughty little puppy"?

Then go, mother, go! I will never come to you when you call me, and never let you feed me any more.

If I were only a little green parrot, and not your baby, mother dear, would you keep me chained lest I should fly away?

Would you shake your finger at me and say, "What an ugrateful wretch of a bird! It is gnawing at its chain day and night"?

Then go, mother, go! I will run away into the woods;

I will never let you take me in your arms again.

Vocation

WHEN the gong sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our lane,

Every day I meet the hawker crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"

There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.

I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, "Bangles, crystal bangles!"

When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school,

I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground.

He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust, nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.

I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to stop me from digging.

Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,

I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and down.

The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamp stands like a giant with one red eye in its head.

The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his side, and never once goes to bed in his life.

I wish I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the shadows with my lantern.

Superior

MOTHER, your baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish! She does not know the difference between the lights in the streets and the stars.

When we play at eating with pebbles, she thinks they are real food, and tries to put them into her mouth.

When I open a book before her and ask her to learn her a, b, c, she tears the leaves with her hands and roars for joy at nothing; this is your baby's way of doing her lesson.

When I shake my head at her in anger and scold her and call her naughty, she laughs and thinks it great fun.

Everybody knows that father is away, but if in play I call aloud "Father," she looks about her in excitement and thinks that father is near.

When I hold my class with the donkeys that our washerman brings to carry away the clothes and I warn her that I am the schoolmaster, she will scream for no reason and call me dada'.

Your baby wants to catch the moon. She is so funny; she calls Ganesh[2] Ganush.

Mother, your baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish!

The Little Big Man

I AM small because I am a little child. I shall be big when I am as old as my father is.

My teacher will come and say, "It is late, bring your slate and your books."

I shall tell him, "Do you not know I am as big as father? And I must not have lessons any more."

My master will wonder and say, "He can leave his books if he likes, for he is grown up."

I shall dress myself and walk to the fair where the crowd is thick.

My uncle will come rushing up to me and say, "You will get lost, my boy; let me carry you."

I shall answer, "Can't you see, uncle, I am as big as father? I must go to the fair alone."

Uncle will say, "Yes, he can go wherever he likes, for he is grown up."

Mother will come from her bath when I am giving money to my nurse, for I shall know how to open the box with my key.

Mother will say, "What are you about, naughty child?"

I shall tell her, "Mother, don't you know, I am as big as father, and I must give silver to my nurse."

Mother will say to herself, "He can give money to whom he likes, for he is grown up."

In the holiday time in October father will come home and, thinking that I am still a baby, will bring for me from the town little shoes and small silken frocks.

I shall say, "Father, give them to my dada, for I am as big as you are."

Father will think and say, "He can buy his own clothes if he likes, for he is grown up."

Twelve O'clock

MOTHER, I do want to leave off my lessons now. I have been at my book all the morning.

You say it is only twelve o'clock. Suppose it isn't any later; can't you ever think it is afternoon when it is only twelve o'clock?

I can easily imagine now that the sun has reached the edge of that rice-fields and the old fisher-woman is gathering herbs for her supper by the side of the pond.

I can just shut my eyes and think that the shadows are growing darker under the *madar* tree, and the water in the pond looks shiny black.

If twelve o'clock can come in the night, why can't the night come when it is twelve o'clock?

Authorship

YOU say that father writes a lot of books, but what he writes I don't understand.

He was reading to you all the evening, but could you really make out what he meant?

What nice stories, mother, you can tell us! Why can't father write like that, I wonder?

Did he never hear from his own mother stories of giants fairies and princesses?

Has he forgotten them all?

Often when he gets late for his bath you have to go and call him an hundred times.

You wait and keep his dishes warm for him, but he goes on writing and forgets.

Father always plays at making books.

If ever I go to play in father's room, you come and call me, "What a naughty child!"

If I make the slightest noise you say, "Don't you see that father's at his work?"

What's the fun of always writing and writing?

When I take up father's pen or pencil and write upon his book just as he does, -a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, - why do you get cross with me then, mother?

You never say a word when father writes.

When my father wastes such heaps of paper, mother, you don't seem to mind at all.

But if 1 take only one sheet to make a boat with, you say, "Child, how troublesome you are!"

What do you think of father's spoiling sheets and sheets of paper with black marks all over on both sides?

The Wicked, Postman

Why do you sit there on the floor so quiet and silent, tell me, mother dear?

The rain is coming in through the open window, making you all wet, and you don't mind it.

Do you hear the gong striking four? It is time for my brother to come home from school.

What has happened to you that you look so strange? Haven't you got a letter from father to-day? I saw the postman bringing letters in his bag for almost everybody in the town.

Only, father's letters he keeps to read himself. I am sure the postman is a wicked man.

But don't be unhappy about that, mother dear. Tomorrow is market day in the next village. You ask your maid to buy some pens and papers.

I myself will write all father's letters; you will not find a single mistake.

I shall write from A tight up to K. But, mother, why do you smile?

You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does!

But I shall rule my paper carefully, and write all the letters beautifully big.

When I finish my writing do you think I shall be so foolish as father and drop it into the horrid postman's bag?

I shall bring it to you myself without waiting, and letter by letter help you to read my writing.

I know the postman does not like to give you the really nice letters.

The Hero

Mother, let us imagine we are travelling, and passing through a strange and dangerous country.

You are riding in a palanquin and I am trotting by you on a red horse.

It is evening and the sun goes down. The waste of Joradighi lies wan and grey before us. The land is desolate and barren.

You are frightened and thinking-"I know not where we have come to." .

I say to you, "Mother, do not be afraid."

The meadow is prickly with spiky grass, and through it runs a narrow broken path.

There are no cattle to be seen in the wide field they have gone to their village stalls.

It grows dark and dim oil the land and sky, and are cannot tell where we are going.

Suddenly you call me and ask me in a whisper, "What light is that near the bank?"

Just then there bursts out a fearful yell, and figures come running towards us.

You sit crouched in your palanquin and repeat the names of the gods in prayer.

The bearers, shaking in terror, hide themselves in the thorny bush.

I shout to you, 'Don't be afraid, mother. I am here."

With long sticks in their Band and hair all wild about their heads, they come nearer and nearer.

I shout, "Have a care, you villains! one step more and you are dead men."

They give another terrible yell and rush forward.

You clutch my hand and say, "Dear boy, for heaven's sake, keep away from them."

I say, "Mother, just you watch ere"

Then I spur my horse for a wild gallop, and my sword and buckler clash against each other.

The fight becomes so fearful, mother, that it would give you a cold shudder could you see it from your palanquin.

Many of them fly, and a great number are cut to pieces.

I know you are thinking, sitting all by yourself, that your boy must be dead by this time.

But I come to you all stained with blood, and say, "Mother, the fight is over now."

You come out and kiss me, pressing me to your heart, and you say to yourself,

"I don't know what I should do if I hadn't my boy to escort me."

A thousand useless things happen day after day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance?

It would be like a story in a book.

My brother would say, "is it possible? I always thought he was so delicate!"

Our village people would all say in amazement, "Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother?"

The End

IT is time for me to go, mother; I am going. When in the paling darkness of the lonely dawn you stretch out your arms for your baby in the bed, I shall say, "Baby is not there!" - mother, I am going.

I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you; and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe, and kiss you and kiss you again.

In the gusty night when the rain patters on the leaves you will hear my whisper in your bed, and my laughter will flash with the lightning through the open window into your room.

If you lie awake, thinking of your baby till late into the night, I shall sing to you from the stars, "Sleep, mother, sleep."

On the straying moonbeams I shall steal over your bed, and lie upon your bosom while you sleep.

I shall become a dream, and through the little opening of your eyelids I shall slip into the depths of your sleep; and when you wake up and look round startled, like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.

When, on the great festival of *puja*, the neighbours' children come and play about the house, I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day.

Dear auntie will come with puja-presents and will ask, "Where is our baby, sister?" Mother, you will tell her softly, "He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul."

The Recall

THE night was dark when she went away, and they slept.

The night is dark now, and I call for her, "Come back, my darling; the world is asleep; and no one would know, if you came for a moment while stars are gazing at stars."

She went away when the trees were in bud and the spring was young.

Now the flowers are in high bloom and I call, "Come back, my darling. The children gather and scatter flowers in reckless sport. And if you come and take one little blossom no one will miss it."

Those that used to play are playing still, so spendthrift is life.

I listen to their chatter and call, "Come back, my darling, for mother's heart is full to the brim with love, and if you come to snatch only one little kiss from her no one will grudge it.

The First Jasmines

AH; these jasmines, these white jasmines!

I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines, these white jasmines.

I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth;

I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight;

Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.

Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hands when I was a child.

Many a glad day has come in my life, and I have laughed with merrymakers on festival nights.

On grey mornings of rain I have crooned many an idle song.

I have worn round my neck the evening wreath of *bakulas* woven by the hand of love.

Yet my heart is sweet with the memory of the first fresh jasmines that filled my hands when I was a child.

The Banyan Tree

O you shaggy-headed banyan tree standing on the bank of the pond, have you forgotten the little child, like the birds that have nested in your branches and left you?

Do you not remember how he sat at the window and wondered at the tangle of your roots that plunged underground?

The women would come to fill their jars in the pond, and your huge black shadow would wriggle on the water like sleep struggling to wake up.

Sunlight danced on the ripples like restless tiny shuttles weaving golden tapestry.

Two ducks swam by the weedy margin above their shadows, and the child would sit still and think.

He longed to be the wind and blow through your rustling branches, to be your shadow and lengthen with the day on the water, to be a bird and perch on your topmost twig, and to float like those ducks among the weeds and shadows.

Benediction

BLESS this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of "heaven for our earth. He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of an hundred cross-roads.

I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way.

He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.

Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.

Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the haven of peace.

The Gift

I WANT to give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.

Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.

But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.

Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring you at one drought and turn and run away from us.

You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us!

We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost for ever.

The river runs swift with a song, braking through all barriers. But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her with his love.

My Song

THIS song of mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.

This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.

When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when your are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness,

My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.

It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.

And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

The Child-Angel

THEY clamour and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wranglings.

Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence.

They are cruel in their greed and their envy,their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.

Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other.

Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.

The Last Bargain

"COME and hire me," I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.

Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.

He held my hand and said, "I will hire you with my power."

But his power counted for naught, and he went away in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.

I wandered along the crooked lane.

And old man came out with bag of gold.

He pondered and said, "I will hire you with my money."

He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all a flower.

The fair maid came out and said, "I will hire you with a smile."

Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly.

A child sat playing with shells.

He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, "I hire you with nothing."

From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's play made me a free man.

16

Nationalism

16

Nationalism in Japan

1

THE worst form of bondage is the bondage of dejection, which keeps men hopelessly chained in loss of faith in themselves. We have been repeatedly told, with some justification, that Asia lives in the past-it is like a rich mausoleum which displays all its magnificence in trying to immortalise the dead. It was said of Asia that it could never move in the path of progress, its face was so inevitably turned backwards. We accepted this accusation, and came believe it. In India, I know, a large section of our educated community, grown tired of feeling the humiliation of this charge against us, is trying with all its resources of self-deception to turn it into a matter of boasting. But boasting is only a masked shame, it does not truly believe in itself.

When things stood still like this, and we in Asia hypnotised ourselves into the belief that it could never by any possibility be otherwise, japan rose from her dreams, and in giant strides left centuries of inaction behind, overtaking the present time in its foremost achievement. This has broken the spell under which we lay in torpor for ages, taking it to be the normal condition of certain races living in certain geographical limits. We forgot that in Asia great kingdoms were founded, philosophy, science, arts and literatures flourished, and all the great religions of the world had their cradles. Therefore it cannot be said that there is anything inherent in the soil and climate of Asia to produce mental inactivity and to atrophy the faculties which impel men to go forward. For centuries we did hold torches of civilisation in the East when the West slumbered in darkness, and that could never be the sign of sluggish minds or narrowness of vision.

Then fell the darkness of night upon all the lands of the East. The current of time seemed to stop at once, and Asia ceased to take any new food, feeding upon its own past, which is really feeding upon itself. The stillness seemed like death, and the great voice was silenced which sent forth messages of eternal truth that have saved man's life from pollution for generations, like the ocean of air that keeps the earth sweet ever cleansing its impurities.

But life has its sleep, its periods of inactivity, when it loses its movements, takes no new food, living upon its past storage. Then it grows helpless, its muscles relaxed, and it easily lends itself to be jeered at for its stupor. In the rhythm of life, pauses there must be for the renewal of life. Life in its activity is ever spending itself, burning all its fuel. This extravagance cannot go on indefinitely, but is always followed by a passive stage, when all expenditure is stopped and all adventures abandoned in favour of rest and slow recuperation.

The tendency of mind is economical: it loves to form habits and move in grooves which save it the trouble of thinking anew at each of its steps. Ideals once formed make the mind lazy. It becomes afraid to risk its acquisitions in fresh endeavours. It tries to enjoy complete security by shutting up its belongings behind fortifications of habits. But this is really shutting oneself up from the fullest enjoyment of one's own possessions. It is miserliness. The living ideals must not lose their touch with the growing and changing life. Their real freedom is not within the boundaries of security, but on the high-road of adventures, full of the risk of new experiences.

One morning the whole world looked up in surprise when japan broke through her walls of old habits in a night and came out triumphant. It was done in such an incredibly short time that it seemed like a change of dress and not like the building up of a new structure. She showed the confident strength of maturity, and the freshness and infinite potentiality of new life at the same moment. The fear was entertained that it was a mere freak of history, a child's game of Time, the blowing up of a soapbubble, perfect in its rondure and colouring, hollow in its heart and without substance. But Japan has proved conclusively that this sudden revealment of her power is not a short-lived wonder, a chance product of time and tide, thrown up from the depth of obscurity to be swept away the next moment into a sea of oblivion.

The truth is that Japan is old and new at the same time. She has her legacy of ancient culture from the East-the culture that enjoins man to look for his true wealth and power in his inner soul, the culture that gives self-possession in the face of loss and danger, self-sacrifice without counting the cost or hoping for gain, defiance of death, acceptance of countless social obligations that we owe to men as social beings. In a word, modern Japan has come out of the immemorial East like a lotus blossoming in easy grace, all the while keeping its firm hold upon the profound depth from which it has sprung.

And Japan, the child of the Ancient East, has also fearlessly claimed all the gifts of the modern age for herself. She has shown her bold spirit in breaking through the confinements of habits, useless accumulations of the lazy mind, which seeks safety in its thrift and its locks and keys. Thus she has come in contact with the living time and has accepted with eagerness and aptitude the responsibilities of modern civilisation.

This it is which has given heart to the rest of Asia. We have seen that the life and the strength are there in us; only the dead crust has to be removed. We have seen that taking shelter in the dead is death itself, and only taking all the risk of life to the fullest extent is living.

I, for myself, cannot believe that Japan has become what she is by imitating the West. We cannot imitate life, we cannot simulate strength for long, nay, what is more, a mere

imitation is a source of weakness. For it hampers our true nature; it is always in our way. It is like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bones at every movement.

The real truth is that science is not man's nature, it is mere knowledge and training. By knowing the laws of the material universe you do not change your deeper humanity. You can borrow knowledge from others, but.you cannot borrow temperament.

But at the imitative stage of our schooling we cannot distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, between what is transferable and what is not. It is something like the faith of the primitive mind in the magical properties of the accidents of outward forms which accompany some real truth. We are afraid of leaving out something valuable and efficacious by not swallowing the husk with the kernel. But while our greed delights in wholesale appropriation, it is the function of our vital nature to assimilate, which is the only true appropriation for a living organism. Where there is life it is sure to assert itself by its choice of acceptance and refusal according to its constitutional necessity. The living organism does not allow itself to grow into its food; it changes its food into its own body. And only thus can it grow strong and not by mere accumulation, or by giving up its personal identity.

Japan has imported her food from the West, but not her vital nature. Japan cannot altogether lose and merge herself in the scientific paraphernalia she has acquired from the West and be turned into a mere borrowed machine. She has her own soul, which must assert itself over all her requirements. That she is capable of doing so, and that the process of assimilation is going on, have been amply proved by the signs of vigorous health that she exhibits. And I earnestly hope that Japan may never lose her faith in her own soul, in the mere pride of her foreign acquisition. For that pride itself is a humiliation, ultimately leading to poverty and weakness. It is the pride of the fop who sets more store on his new head-dress than on his head itself.

The whole world waits to see what this great eastern nation is going to do with the opportunities and responsibilities she has accepted from the hands of the modern time. If it be a mere reproduction of the West, then the great expectation she has raised will remain unfulfilled. For there are grave questions that western civilisation has presented before the world but not completely answered. The conflict between the individual and the state, labour and capital, the man and the woman; the conflict between the greed of material gain and the spiritual life of man, the organised selfishness of nations and the higher ideals of humanity; the conflict between all the ugly complexities inseparable from giant organisations of commerce and state and the natural instincts of man crying for simplicity and beauty and fulness of leisure- all these have to be brought to a harmony in ,a manner not yet dreamt of.

We have. seen this great stream of civilisation choking itself from debris carried by its innumerable channels. We have seen that with all its vaunted love of humanity it has proved itself the greatest menace to Man, far worse than the sudden outbursts of nomadic barbarism from which men suffered in the early ages of history. We have seen that, in spite of its boasted love of freedom, it has produced worse forms of slavery than ever were current in earlier societies-slavery whose chains are unbreakable, either because they are unseen, or because they assume the names and appearance of freedom. We have seen, under the spell of its gigantic sordidness, man losing faith in all the heroic ideals of life which have made him great.

Therefore you cannot with a light heart accept the modern civilisation with all its tendencies, methods and structures, and dream that they are inevitable. You must apply your eastern mind, your spiritual strength, your love of simplicity, your recognition of social obligation, in order to cut out a new path for this great unwieldy car of progress, shrieking out its loud discords as it runs. You must minimise the immense sacrifice of man's life and freedom that it claims in its every movement. For generations you have felt and thought and worked, have enjoyed and worshipped in ,your own special manner; and this cannot be cast off like old clothes. It is in your blood, in the marrow of your bones, in the texture of your flesh, in the tissue of your brains; and it must modify everything you lay your hands upon, without your knowing, even against your wishes. Once you did solve the problems of man to your own satisfaction, you had your philosophy of life and evolved your own art of living. All this you must apply to the present situation, and out of it will arise a new creation and not a mere repetition, a creation which the soul of your people will own for itself and proudly offer to the world as its tribute to the welfare of man. Of all countries in Asia, here in Japan you have the freedom to use the materials you have gathered from the West according to your genius and your need. Therefore your responsibility is all the greater, for in your voice Asia shall answer the questions that Europe has submitted to the conference of Man. In your land the experiments will be carried on by which the East will change the aspects of modern civilisation, infusing life in it where it is a machine, substituting the human heart for cold" expediency, not caring so much for power and success as for harmonious and living growth, for truth and beauty.

I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which can exist between nations. There was a living communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which messages ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity. We did not stand in fear of each other; we had not to arm ourselves to keep each other in check; our relation was not that of self-interest, of exploration and spoliation of each other's pocket; ideas and ideals were exchanged, gifts of the highest love were, offered and taken; no difference of languages and customs hindered us in approaching each

other heart to heart; no pride of race or insolent consciousness of superiority, physical or mental, marred our relation; our arts and literatures put forth new leaves and flowers under the influence of this sunlight of united hearts, and races belonging to different lands and languages and histories acknowledged the highest unity of man and the deepest bond of love. May we not also remember that in those days of peace and goodwill, of men uniting for those supreme ends of life, your nature laid by for itself the balm of immortality which has helped your people to be born again in a new age, to be able to survive its old outworn structures and take on a new young body, to come out unscathed from the shock of the most wonderful revolution that the world has ever seen?

The political civilisation which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril, and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness. Before this political civilisation came to its power and opened its hungry jaws wide enough to gulp down great continents of the earth, we had wars, pillages, changes of monarchy and consequent miseries, but never such a sight of fearful and hopeless voracity, such wholesale feeding of nation upon nation, such huge machines for turning great portions of the earth into mince-meat, never such terrible jealousies with all their ugly teeth and claws ready for tearing open each other's vitals. This political civilisation is scientific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. It betrays its trust, it weaves its meshes of lies without shame, it enshrines gigantic idols of greed in its temples, taking great pride in the costly ceremonials of its worship, calling this patriotism. And it can be safely prophesied that this cannot go on, for there is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and to organised bodies of then. You cannot go on violating these laws in the name of your nation, yet enjoy their advantage as individuals. This public sapping of ethical ideals slowly reacts upon each member of society, gradually breeding weakness where it is not seen, and causing that cynical distrust of all things sacred in human nature, which is the true symptom of senility. You must keep in mind that this political civilisation, this creed of rational patriotism, has not been given a long trial. The lamp of ancient Greece is extinct in the land where it was first lighted; the power of Rome lies dead and buried under the ruins of its vast empire. But the civilisation, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and in India. Though it may look feeble and small, judged by the standard of the mechanical power of modern days, yet like small seeds it still contains life and will sprout and grow, and spread its beneficent branches, producing flowers and fruits when its time comes and showers of grace descend upon it from heaven. But ruins of skyscrapers of power, and broken machinery of greed, even God's rain is powerless to raise up again; for they were not of life, but went against life as a whole-they are relics of the rebellion that shattered itself to pieces against the eternal.

But the charge is brought against us that the ideals we cherish in the East are static, that they have not the impetus in them to move, to open out new vistas of knowledge and power, that the systems of philosophy which are the mainstays of the time-worn civilisations of the East despise all outward proofs, remaining stolidly satisfied in their subjective certainty. This proves that when our knowledge is vague we are apt to accuse of vagueness our object of knowledge itself. To a western observer our civilisation appears as all metaphysics, as to a deaf man piano-playing appears to be mere movements of fingers and no music. He cannot think that we have found some deep basis of reality upon which we have built our institutions.

Unfortunately all proofs of reality are in realisation. The reality of the scene before you depends only upon the fact that you can see, and it is difficult for us to prove to an unbeliever that our civilisation is not a nebulous system of abstract speculations, that it has achieved something which is a positive truth-a truth that can give man's heart its shelter and sustenance. It has evolved all inner sense-a sense of vision, the vision of the infinite reality in all finite things.

But he says, 'You do not make any progress; there is no movement in you.' I ask him, 'How do you know it? You have to judge progress according to its aim. A railway train makes its progress towards the terminus station-it is movement. But a full-grown tree has no definite movement of that kind; its progress is the inward progress of life. It lives, with its aspiration towards light tingling in its leaves and creeping in its silent sap.'

We also have lived for centuries; we still live, and we have our aspiration for a reality that has no end to its realisation-a reality that goes beyond death, giving it a meaning, that rises above all evils of life, bringing its peace and purity, its cheerful renunciation of self. The product of this inner life is a living product. It will be needed when the youth returns home weary and dust-laden, when the soldier is wounded, when the wealth is squandered away and pride is humbled, when man's heart cries for truth in the immensity of facts, and harmony in the contradiction of tendencies. Its value is not in its multiplication of materials, but in its spiritual fulfilment.

There are things that cannot wait. You have to rush and run and march if you must fight or take the best place in the market. You strain your nerves and are on the alert when you chase opportunities that are always on the wing. But there are ideals which do not play hide-and- with our life; they slowly grow from seed to flower, from flower to fruit; they require infinite space and heaven's light to mature, and the fruits that they produce can survive years of insult and neglect.

The East with her ideals, in whose bosom are stored the ages of sunlight and silence of stars, can patiently wait till the 'West, hurrying after the expedient, loses breath and stops. Europe, while busily speeding to her engagements, disdainfully casts her glance from her carriage window at the reaper reaping his harvest in the field, and in her intoxication of speed cannot but think of him as slow and ever receding backwards. But the speed comes to its end; the engagement loses its meaning and the hungry heart clamours for food, till at last she comes to the lowly reaper reaping his harvest in the sun. For if the office cannot wait, or the buying and selling, or the craving for excitement, love waits, and beauty, and the wisdom of suffering and the fruits of patient devotion and reverent meekness of simple faith. And thus shall wait the East till her time comes.

I must not hesitate to acknowledge where Europe is great, for great she is without doubt. We cannot help loving her with all our heart and paying her the best homage of our admiration-the Europe who, in her literature and art, pours out an inexhaustible cascade of beauty and truth fertilising all countries and all time; the Europe who, with a mind which is titanic in its untiring power, is sweeping the height and the depth of the universe, winning her homage of knowledge from the infinitely great and the infinitely small, applying all the resources of her great intellect and heart in healing the sick and alleviating those miseries of man which up till now we were contented to accept in a spirit of hopeless resignation; the Europe who is making the earth yield more fruit than seemed possible, coaxing and compelling the great forces of nature into man's service. Such true greatness must have its motive power in spiritual strength. For only the spirit of man can defy all limitations, have faith in its ultimate success, throw its searchlight beyond the immediate and the apparent, gladly suffer martyrdom for ends which cannot be achieved in its lifetime and accept failure without acknowledging defeat. In the heart of Europe runs the purest stream of human love, of love of justice, of spirit of self-sacrifice for higher ideals. The Christian culture of centuries has sunk deep in her life's core. In Europe we have seen noble minds who have ever stood up for the rights of man irrespective of colour and creed; who have braved calumny and insult from their own people in fighting for humanity's cause and raising their voices against the mad orgies of militarism, against the rage for brutal retaliation or rapacity that sometimes takes possession of a whole people; who are always ready to make reparation for wrongs done in the past by their own nations and vainly attempt to stem the tide of cowardly injustice that flows unchecked because the resistance is weak and innocuous on the part of the injured. There are these knight-errants of modern Europe who have not lost their faith in the disinterested love of freedom, in the ideals which own no geographical boundaries or national self-seeking. These are there to prove that the fountainhead of the water of everlasting life has not run dry in Europe, and from thence she will have her rebirth time after time. Only there, where Europe is too consciously busy in building up her power, defying her deeper nature and mocking it, she is heaping up her iniquities to the sky, crying for God's vengeance and spreading the infection of ugliness, physical and moral, over the face of the earth with her heartless commerce heedlessly outraging man's sense of the beautiful and the good. Europe is supremely good in her beneficence where her face is turned to all humanity; and Europe is supremely evil in her maleficent aspect where her face is .turned only upon her own interest, using all her power of greatness for ends which are against the infinite and eternal in Man.

Eastern Asia has been pursuing its own path, evolving its own civilisation, which was not political but social, not predatory and mechanically efficient but spiritual and based upon all the varied and deeper relations of humanity. The solutions of the life problems of peoples were thought out in seclusion and carried out behind the security of aloofness, where all the dynastic changes and foreign invasions hardly touched them. But now we are overtaken by the outside world, our seclusion is lost for ever. Yet this we must not regret, as a plant should never regret when the obscurity of its seed-time is broken. Now the time has come when we must make the world problem our own problem; we must bring the spirit of civilisation into harmony with the history of all nations of the earth; we must not, in foolish pride, still keep ourselves fast within the shell of the seed and the crust of the earth which protected and nourished our ideals; for these, the shell and the crust, were meant to be broken, so that life may spring up in all its vigour and beauty, bringing its offerings to the world in open light.

In this task of breaking the barrier and facing the world Japan has come out the first in the East. She has infused hope in the heart of all Asia.

This hope provides the hidden fire which is needed for all works of creation. Asia now feels that she must prove her life by producing living work; she must not lie passively dormant, or feebly imitate the West, in the infatuation of fear and flattery. For this we offer our thanks to this Land of the Rising Sun and solemnly ask her to remember that she has the mission of the East to fulfil. She must infuse the sap of a fuller humanity into the heart of modern civiiisation. She must never allow it to get choked with noxious undergrowth, but lead it up towards light and freedom, towards the pure air and broad space where it can receive, in the dawn of its day and the darkness of its night, heaven's inspiration. Let the greatness of her ideals become visible to all men like her snowcrowned Fuji rising from the heart of the country into the region of the infinite, supremely distinct from its surroundings, beautiful like a maiden in its magnificent sweep of curve, yet firm and strong and serenely majestic.

II

I have travelled in many countries and have met with men of all classes, but never in my travels did I feel the presence of the human so distinctly as in this land. In other great countries signs of man's power loomed urge, and I saw vast organisations which showed efficiency in all their features. There, display and extravagance, in dress, in

furniture, in costly entertainments, are startling. They seem to push you back into a corner, like a poor intruder at a feast; they are apt to make you envious, or take your breath away with amazement. There, you do not feel man as supreme; you are hurled against a stupendousness of things that alienate. But in Japan it is not the display of power or wealth that is the predominating element. You see everywhere emblems of love and admiration, and not mostly of ambition and greed. You see a people whose heart has come out and scattered itself in profusion in its commonest utensils of everyday life, in its social institutions, in its manners, which are carefully perfect, and in its dealings with things which are not only deft but graceful in every movement.

What has impressed me most in this country is the conviction that you have realised nature's secrets, not by methods of analytical knowledge, but by sympathy. You have known her language of lines, and music of colours, the symmetry in her irregularities, and the cadence in her freedom of movements; you have seen how she leads her immense crowds of things yet avoids all frictions, how the very conflicts in her creations break out in dance and music, how her exuberance has the aspect of the fulness of self-abandonment, and not a mere dissipation of display. You have discovered that nature reserves her power in forms of beauty; and it is this beauty which, like a mother, nourishes all the giant forces at her breast, keeping them in active vigour, yet in repose. You have known that energies of nature save themselves from wearing out by the rhythm of a perfect grace, and that she, with the tenderness of her curved lines, takes away fatigue from the world's muscles. I have felt that you have been able to assimilate these secrets into your life, and the truth which lies in the beauty of all things has passed into your souls. A mere knowledge of things can be had in a short enough time, but their spirit can only be acquired by centuries of training and self-control. Dominating nature from outside is a much simpler thing than making her your own in love's delight, which is a work of true genius. Your race has shown that genius, not by acquirement but by creation, not by display of things but by manifestation of its own inner being. This creative power there is in all nations, and it is ever active in getting hold of men's natures and giving them a form according to its ideals. But here, in Japan, it seems to have achieved its success, and deeply sunk into the minds of all men, and permeated their muscles and nerves. Your instincts have become true, your senses keen, and your hands have acquired natural skill. The genius of Europe has given her people the power of organisation, which has specially made itself manifest in politics and commerce and in co-ordinating scientific knowledge. The genius of Japan has given you the vision of beauty in nature and the power of realising it in your life.

All particular civilisation is the interpretation of particular human experience. Europe seems to have felt emphatically the conflict of things in the universe, which can only be brought under control by conquest. Therefore she is ever ready for fight, and the best portion of her attention is occupied in organising forces. But Japan has felt, in her world, the touch of some presence, which has evoked in her soul a feeling of reverent adoration. She does not boast of her mastery of nature, but to her she brings, with infinite care and joy, her offerings of love. Her relationship with the world is the deeper relationship of heart. This spiritual bond of love she has established with the hills of her country, with the sea and the streams, with the forests in all their flowery moods and varied physiognomy of branches; she has taken into her heart all the rustling whispers and sighing of the woodlands and sobbing of the waves; the sun and the moon she has studied in all the modulations of their lights and shades, and she is glad to close her shops to greet the seasons in her orchards and gardens and cornfields. This opening of the heart to the soul of the world is not confined to a section of your privileged classes; it is not the forced product of exotic culture, but it belongs to all' your men and women of all conditions. This experience of your soul, in meeting a personality in the heart of the world, has been embodied in your civilisation. It is a civilisation of human relationship. Your duty towards your state has naturally assumed the character of filial duty, your nation becoming one family with your Emperor as its head. Your national unity has not been evolved from the comradeship of arms for defensive and offensive purpose, or from partnership in raiding adventures, dividing among each member the danger and spoils of robbery. It is not an outcome of the necessity of organisation for some ulterior purpose, but it is an extension of the family and obligations of the heart in a wide field of space and time. The ideal of *maitri* is at the bottom of your culture- *maitri* with men and *maitri* with Nature. And the true expression of this love is in the language of beauty, which is so abundantly universal in this land. This is the reason why a stranger like myself, instead of feeling-envy or humiliation before these manifestations of beauty, these creations of love, feels a readiness to participate in the joy and glory of such revealment of the human heart.

And this had made me all the more apprehensive of the change which threatens Japanese civilisation, as something like a menace to one's own person. For the huge heterogeneity of the modem age, whose only common bond is usefulness, is nowhere so pitifully exposed against the dignity and hidden power of reticent beauty as in Japan.

But the danger lies in this, that organised ugliness storms the mind and carries the day by its mass, by its aggressive persistence, but its power of mockery directed against the deeper sentiments of the heart. Its harsh obtrusiveness makes it forcibly visible to us, overcoming our senses-and we bring sacrifices to its alter, as does a savage to the fetish which appears powerful because of its hideousness. Therefore its rivalry with things. that are modest and profound and have the subtle delicacy of life is to be dreaded.

I am quite sure that there are men in your country who are not in sympathy with your inherited ideals, whose object is to gain and not to grow. They are loud in their boast that they have modernised Japan. While I agree with them so far as to say that the spirit of the race should harmonise with

the spirit of the time, I must warn them that modernising is a mere affectation of modernism, just as an affectation of poesy is poetising. It is nothing but mimicry, only affectation, is louder than the original, and it is too literal. One must bear in mind that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernise, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts. Modernism is not in the dress of the Europeans, or in the hideous structures where their children are interned when they take their lessons, or in the square houses with flat, straight wallsurfaces, pierced with parallel lines of windows, where these people are caged in their lifetime; certainly modernism is not in their ladies' bonnets, carrying on them loads of incongruities. These are not modern, but merely European. True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life-a mere imitation of our science teachers who reduce it into a superstition, absurdly invoking its aid for all impossible purposes.

Life based upon mere science is attractive to some men, because it has all the characteristics of sport; it feigns seriousness, but is not profound. When you go a-hunting, the less pity you have the better; for your one object is to chase the game and kill it, to feel that you are the greater animal, that your method of destruction is thorough and scientific. And the life of science is that superficial life. It pursues success with skill and thoroughness, and takes no account of the higher nature of man. But those whose minds are crude enough to plan their lives upon the supposition that man is merely a hunter and his paradise the paradise of sportsmen will be rudely awakened in the midst of their trophies of skeletons and skulls.

I do not for a moment suggest that Japan should be unmindful of acquiring modern weapons of self-protection. But this should never be allowed to go beyond her instinct of self-preservation. She must know that the real power is not in the weapons themselves, but in the man who wields those weapons; and when he, in his eagerness for power, multiplies his weapons at the cost of his own soul, then it is he who is in even greater danger than his enemies.

Things that are living are so easily hurt; therefore they require protection. In nature, life protects itself within its coverings, which are built with life's own material. Therefore they are in harmony with life's growth, or else when the time comes they easily give way and are forgotten. The living man has his true protection in his spiritual ideals which have their vital connection with his life, and grow with his growth. But, unfortunately, all his armour is not living-some of it is made of steel, inert and mechanical. Therefore, while making use of it, man has to be careful to protect himself from its tyranny. If he is weak enough to grow smaller to fit himself to his covering, then it becomes a process of gradual suicide by shrinkage of the soul. And Japan must have a firm faith in the moral law of existence to be able to assert to herself that the western nations are following that path of suicide, where they are smothering their humanity under the immense weight of organisations in order to keep themselves in power and hold others in subjection.

What is dangerous for Japan is not the imitation of the outer features of the West, but the acceptance of the motive force of western nationalism as her own. Her social ideals are already showing signs of defeat at the hands of politics. I can see her motto, taken from science, 'Survival of the fittest', writ large at the entrance of her present day history-the motto whose meaning is, 'Help yourself, and never heed what it costs to others', the motto of the blind man who only believes in what he can touch, because he cannot see. But those who. can see know that men are so closely knit that when you strike others the blow comes back to yourself. The moral law, which is the greatest discovery of man, is the discovery of this wonderful truth, that man becomes all the truer the more he realises himself in others. This truth has not only a subjective value, but is manifested in every department of our life. And nations who sedulously cultivate moral blindness as the cult of patriotism will end their existence in a sudden and violent death. In past ages we had foreign invasions, but they never touched the soul of the people deeply. They were merely the outcome of individual ambitions. The people themselves, being free from the responsibilities of the baser and more heinous side of those adventures, had all the advantage of the heroic and the human disciplines derived from them. This developed their unflinching loyalty, their singleminded devotion to the obligations of honour, their power of complete self-surrender and fearless acceptance of death and danger. Therefore the ideals, whose seats were in the hearts of the people, would not undergo any serious change owing to the policies adopted by the kings or generals. But now, where the spirit of western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means-by the manufacture of half-truths and untruths in history, by persistent misrepresentation of other races and the culture of unfavourable sentiments towards them, by setting up memorials of events, very often false, which for the sake of humanity should be speedily forgotten, thus continually brewing evil menace towards neighbours and nations other than their own. This is poisoning the very fountainhead of humanity. It is discrediting the ideals which were born of the lives of men who were our greatest and best. It is holding up gigantic selfishness as the one universal religion for all nations of the world. We can take anything else from the hands of science, but not this elixir of moral death. Never think for a moment that the hurts you inflict upon other races will not infect you, or that the enmities you sow around your homes will be a wall of protection to you for all time to come. To imbue tile minds of the whole people with an abnormal vanity of its own superiority, to teach it to take pride in its moral callousness and ill-begotten wealth, to perpetuate the humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies won from war, and using these in schools in order to breed in children's minds contempt for others, is imitating the West where she has a festering sore, whose swelling is a swelling of disease eating into its vitality.

Our food crops, which are necessary for our sustenance, are products of centuries of selection and care. But the vegetation, which we have not to transform into our lives, does not require the patient thoughts of generations. It is not easy to get rid of weeds; but it is easy, by process of neglect, to ruin your food crops and let their revert to their primitive state of wildness. Likewise the culture, which has so kindly adapted itself to your soil-so intimate with life, so human-not only needed tilling and weeding in past ages, but still needs anxious work and watching. What is merely modern-as science and methods of organisation-can be transplanted; but what is vitally human has fibres so delicate, and roots so numerous and far-reaching, that it dies when moved from the soil. Therefore I am afraid of the rude pressure of the political ideals of the West upon your own. In political civilisation, the state is an abstraction and the relationship of men utilitarian. Because it has no root in sentiments, it is so dangerously easy to handle. Half a century has been enough for you to master this machine; and there are men among you whose fondness for it exceeds their love for the living ideals, which were born with the birth of your nation and nursed in your centuries. It is like a child who, in the excitement of his play, imagines he likes his play-things better than his mother.

Where man is at his greatest, he is unconscious. Your civilisation, whose mainspring is the bond of human relationship, has been nourished in the depth of a healthy life beyond reach of prying self-analysis. But a mere political relationship is all-conscious; it is an eruptive inflammation of aggressiveness. It has forcibly burst upon your notice. And the time has come when you have to be roused into full consciousness of the truth by which you live, so that you may not be taken unawares. The past has been God's gift to you; about the present, you must make your own choice.

So the questions you have to put to yourselves are these: 'Have we read the world wrong, and based our relation to it upon an ignorance of human nature? Is the instinct of the West right, where she builds her national welfare behind the barricade of a universal distrust of humanity?'

You must have detected a strong accent of fear whenever the West has discussed the possibility of the rise of a n eastern race. The reason of it is this, that the power by whose help she thrives is an evil power; so long as it is held on her own side she can be safe, while the rest of the world trembles. The vital ambition of the present civilisation of Europe is to have the exclusive possession of the devil. All her armaments anddiplomacy are directed upon this one object. But these costly rituals for invocation of the evil spirit lead through a path of prosperity to the bunk of cataclysm. The furies of terror, which the West has let loose Upon God's world, come back to threaten herself and goad her into preparations of more and more frightfulness; this gives her no rest, and snakes her forget all else but the perils that she causes to others and incurs herself. To the worship of this devil of politics she sacrifices other countries as victims. She feeds upon their dead flesh and grows fat upon it, so long as the carcasses remain fresh-but they are sure to rot at last, and the dead will take their revenge by spreading pollution far and wide and poisoning the vitality of the feeder. Japan had all her wealth of humanity, her harmony of heroism and beauty, her depth of self-control and richness of self-expression; yet the western nations felt no respect for her till she proved that the bloodhounds of Satan are not only bred in the kennels of Europe but can also be domesticated in Japan and fed with man's miseries. They admit Japan's equality with themselves, only when they know that Japan also possesses the key to open floodgate of hell-fire upon the fair earth ever she cho and cats dance in their own measure the devil dance of pillage, murder and ravishment of innocent women, while the world goes to ruin. We know that, in the early state of man's moral immaturity, he only feels reverence for the god whose malevolence he dreads. But is this the ideal of man which we can look up to with pride: after centuries of civilisation nations fearing each other like the prowling wild beasts of the night-time; shutting their doors of hospitality; combining only for purpose of aggression or defence; hiding in their holes their trade secrets, state secrets, secrets of their, armaments; making peace-offerings to each other's barking dogs with the meat which does not belong to them; holding down fallen races which struggle to stand upon their feet; with their right hands dispensing religion to weaker peoples, while robbing them with their left- is there anything in this to make us envious? Are we to bend our knees to the spirit of this nationalism, which is sowing broadcast over all the world seeds of fear, greed, suspicion, unashamed lies of its diplomacy, and unctuous lies of its profession of peace and goodwill and universal brotherhood of Man? Can our minds be free from doubt when we rush to the western market to buy this foreign product in exchange for our own inheritance? I am aware how difficult it is to know one's self; and the man who is intoxicated furiously denies his drunkenness; yet the West herself is anxiously thinking of her problems and trying experiments. But she is like a glutton who has not the hear to give up his intemperance in eating, and fondly clings to the hope he can cure his nightmares of indigestion by medicine. Europe is not ready to give up her political inhumanity, with all the baser passions of man attendant upon it; she believes only in modification of systems, and not in change of heart.

We are willing to buy their machine-made systems, not with our hearts, but with our brains. We shall try them and build sheds for them, but not enshrine them in our homes or temples. There are races who worship the animals they kill; we can buy meat from them when we are hungry, but not the worship which goes with the killing. We must not vitiate our children's minds with the superstition that business is business, war is war, politics is politics. We must know that man's business has to be more than mere business, and so should be his war and politics. You had your own industry in Japan; how scrupulously honest and true it was, you can see by its products-by their grace and strength, their conscientiousness in details, where they can hardly be observed. But the tidal

wave of falsehood has swept over your land from that part of the world where business is business, and honesty is followed merely as a best policy. Have you never felt shame when you see the trade advertisements, not only plastering the whole town with lies and exaggerations, but invading the green fields, where the peasants do their honest labour, and the hill-tops, which greet the first pure light of the morning? It is so easy to dull our sense of honour and delicacy of mind with constant abrasion, while falsehoods stalk abroad with proud steps in the name of trade, politics and patriotism. that any protest against their perpetual intrusion into our lives is considered to be sentimentalism, unworthy of true manliness.

And it has come to pass that the children of those heroes who would keep their word at the. point of death, who would disdain to cheat men for vulgar profit, who even in their fight would much rather court defeat than be dishonourable, leave become energetic in dealing with falsehoods and do not feel humiliated by gaining advantage from them. And this has been effected by the charm of the word 'modern'. But if undiluted utility be modern, beauty is of all ages; if mean. selfishness be modern, the human ideals are no new inventions. And we must know for certain that however modern may be the proficiency which cripples man for the sake of methods and machines, it will never live to be old.

But while trying to free our minds from the arrogant claims of Europe and to help ourselves out of the quick sands of our infatuation, we may go to the other extreme and bind ourselves with a wholesale suspicion of the West. The reaction of disillusionment is just as unreal as the first shock of illusion. We must try to come to that normal state of mind by which we can clearly discern our own danger and avoid it without being unjust towards the source of that danger. There is always the natural temptation in us of wishing to pay back Europe in her own coin, and return contempt for contempt and evil for evil. But that again would be to imitate Europe in one of her worst features, which comes out in her behaviour to people whom she describes as yellow or red, brown or black. And this is a point on which we in the East have to acknowledge our guilt and own that our sin has been as great, if nest greater, when we insulted humanity by treating with titter disdain and cruelty men who belonged to a particular creed, colour or caste. It is really because we are afraid, of our own weakness, which allows itself to be overcome by the sight of power, that we try to substitute for it another weakness which make itself blind to the glories of the Nest. When we truly know that Europe which is great and good, we call effectively save ourselves from the Europe which is mean and grasping. It is easy to be unfair in one's judgement when one is faced with human miseries-and pessimism is the result of building theories while the mind is suffering. To despair of humanity is only possible if we lose faith in truth which brings to it strength, when its defeat is greatest, and calls out new life from the depth of its destruction. 'Are must admit that there is a living soul in the West which is struggling unobserved against the hugeness of the organisations tinder which men, women and children are being crushed, and whose mechanical necessities are ignoring laws that are spiritual and human-the soul whose'sensibilities refuse to be dulled completely by dangerous habits of heedlessness in dealings with races for whom it lacks natural sympathy. The West could never have risen to the eminence she has reached if her strength were merely the strength of the brute or of the machine. The divine in her heart is suffering from the injuries inflicted by her hands upon the world-and from this pain of her higher nature flows the secret balm which will bring healing to these injuries. Time after time she has fought against herself and has undone the chains which with her own hands she fastened round helpless limbs; and though she forced poison down the throat of a great nation at the point of the sword for gain of money, she herself woke up to withdraw from it, to wash her hands clean again. This shows hidden springs of humanity in spots which look dead and barren. It proves that the deeper truth in her nature, which can survive such a career of cruel cowardliness, is not greed, but reverence for unselfish ideals. It would be altogether unjust, both to us and to Europe, to say that she has fascinated the modern eastern mind by the mere exhibition of her power. Through the smoke of cannons and dust of markets the light of her moral nature has shone bright, and she has brought to us the ideal of ethical freedom, whose foundation lies deeper than social conventions and whose province of activity is worldwide.

The East has instinctively felt, even through her aversion, that she has a great deal to learn from Europe, not merely about the materials of power, but about its inner source, which is of the mind and of the moral nature of man. Europe has been teaching us the higher obligations of public good above those of the family and the clan, and the sacredness of law, which makes society independent of individual caprice, secures for it continuity of progress, and guarantees justice to all men of all positions in life. Above all things Europe has held high before our minds the banner of liberty, through centuries of martyrdom and achievement-liberty of conscience, liberty of thought and action, liberty in the ideals of art and literature. And because Europe has won our deep respect, she has become so dangerous for us where she is turbulently weak and false-dangerous like poison when it is served along with our best food. There is one safety for us upon which we hope we may count, and that is that we can claim Europe herself as our ally in our resistance to her temptations and to her violent encroachments; for she has ever carried her own standard of perfection, by which we can measure her falls and gauge her degrees of failure, by which we can call her before her own tribunal and put her to shame-the shame which is the sign of the true pride of nobleness.

But our fear is that the poison may be more powerful than the food, and what is strength in her today may not be a sign of health, but the contrary; for it may be temporarily caused by the upsetting of the balance of life. Our fear is that evil has a fateful fascination when it assumes dimensions which are colossal-and though at last it is sure to lose its

centre of gravity by its abnormal disproportion, the mischief which it creates before its fall may be beyond reparation.

Therefore I ask you to have the strength of faith - and clarity of mind to know for certain that the lumbering structure of modem progress, riveted by the iron bolts of efficiency, which runs upon the wheels of ambition, cannot hold together for long. Collisions are certain to occur, for it has to travel upon organised lines; it is too heavy to choose its own course freely, and once it is off the rails its endless train of vehicles is dislocated. A day will come when it will fall in a heap of ruin and cause serious obstruction to the traffic of the world. Do we not see signs of this even now? Does not the voice come to us through the din of war, the shrieks of hatred, the wailings of despair, through the churning of the unspeakable filth which has been accumulating for ages in the bottom of this nationalism-the voice which cries to our soul that the tower of national selfishness, which goes by the name of patriotism, which has raised its banner of treason against heaven, must totter and fall with a crash, weighed down by its own bulk, its flag kissing the dust, its light extinguished? My brothers, when the red light of conflagration sends up its crackle of laughter to the stars, keep your faith upon those stars and not upon the fire of destruction. For when the conflagration consumes itself and dies down, leaving its memorial in ashes, the eternal light will again shine in the East-the East which has been the birthplace of the morning sun of man's history. And who knows if that day has not already dawned, and the sun not risen, in the easternmost horizon of Asia? And I offer, as did my ancestor *rishis* my salutation to that sunrise of the East, which is destined once again to illumine the whole world.

I know my voice is too feeble to raise itself above the uproar of this bustling time, and it is easy for any street urchin to fling against me the epithet of 'unpractical'. It will stick to my coat-tail, never to be washed away, effectively excluding me from the consideration of all respectable persons. I know what a risk one runs from the vigorously athletic crowds in being styled a n idealist in these days, when thrones have lost their dignity and prophets have become an anachronism, when the sound that drowns all voices is the noise of the market-place. Yet when, one day, standing on the outskirts of Yokohama town. bristling with its display of modern miscellanies, I watched the sunset in your southern sea, and saw its peace and majesty among your pine-clad hills-with the great Fujiyama growing faint against the golden horizon, like a god overcome with his own radiance-the music of eternity welled up through the evening silence, and I felt that the sky and the earth and the lyrics of the dawn and the dayfall are with the poets and idealists, and not with the marketmen robustly contemptuous of all sentiment-that, after all the forgetfulness of his divinity, man will remember again that heaven is always in touch with his world, which can never be abandoned for good to the hounding wolves of the modern era, scenting human blood and howling to the skies.

Nationalism in the West

MAN'S history is being shaped according to the difficulties it encounters. These have offered us problems and claimed their solutions from us, the penalty of non-fulfilment being death or degradation.

These difficulties have been different in different. peoples of the earth, and in the manner of our overcoming them lies our distinction.

The Scythians of the earlier period of Asiatic history had to struggle with the scarcitv of their natural resources. The easiest solution that they could think of was to organise their whole population, men, women, and children, into bands of robbers. And they were irresistible to those who were chiefly engaged in the constructive work of social co-operation.

But fortunately for man the easiest path is not his truest path. If his nature were not as complex as it is, if it were as simple as that of a pack of hungry wolves, then, by this time, those hordes of marauders would have overrun the whole earth. But man, when confronted with difficulties, has to acknowledge that he is man, that he has his responsibilities to the higher faculties of his nature, by ignoring which he may achieve success that is immediate, perhaps, but that will become a death-trap to him. For what are obstacles to the lower creatures are opportunities to the higher life of man.

To India has been given her problem from the beginning of history-it is the. race problem. Paces ethnologically different have in this country come into close contact. This fact has been and still continues to be the most important one is our history. It is our mission to face it and prove our humanity by dealing with it in the fullest truth. Until we fulfil our mission all other benefits will be denied us.

There are other peoples in the world who have to overcome obstacles in their physical surroundings, or the menace of their powerful neighbours. They have organised their power till they are not only reasonably free from the tyranny of Nature and human neighbours, but have a surplus of it left in their hands to employ against others. But in India, our difficulties being internal, our history has been the history of continual social adjustment and not that of organised power for defence and aggression.

Neither the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship, is the goal of human history. And India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulation of differences on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity on the other. She has made grave errors in setting up the boundary walls too rigidly between races, in perpetuating in her classifications the results of inferiority; often she has crippled her children's minds

and narrowed their lives in order to fit them into her social forms, but for centuries new experiments have been made end adjustments carried out.

Her mission has been like that of a hostess who has to provide proper accommodation for numerous guests, whose habits and requirements are different from one another. This gives rise to infinite complexities whose solution depends not merely upon tactfulness but upon sympathy and true realisation of the unity of man. Towards this realisation have worked, from the early time of the *Upanishads*[1] up to the present moment, a series of great spiritual teachers, whose one object has been to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God. In fact, our history has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy. In our country records of these days have been despised and forgotten, for they in no way represent the true history of our people. Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals.

But we feel that our task is not yet done. The world-flood has swept over our country, "new elements have been introduced, and wider adjustments are -waiting to be made.

We feel this all the more because the teaching and example of the West have entirely run counter to what we think was given to India to accomplish. In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their use and high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision. Obviously God made man to be human, but this modern product has such marvellous squarecut finish, savouring of gigantic manufacture, that the Creator will find it difficult to recognise it as a thing of spirit and a creature made in His own divine image.

But I am anticipating. What I was about to say is this. Take it in whatever spirit you like, here is India, of about fifty centuries at least, who tried to live peacefully and think deeply, the India devoid of all politics, the India of no nations, whose one ambition has been to know this world as of soul, to live here every moment of her life in the meek spirit of adoration, in the glad consciousness of an eternal and personal relationship with it. It was upon this remote portion of humanity, childlike in its manner, with the wisdom of the old, that the Nation of the West burst in.

Through all the fights and intrigues and deceptions of her earlier history India had remained aloof. Because her homes, her fields, her temples of worship, her schools, where her teachers and students lived together in the atmosphere of simplicity and devotion and learning, her village self-government with its simple laws and peaceful administration-all these truly belonged to her. But her thrones were not her concern. They passed over her head like clouds, now tinged with purple gorgeousness, now black with the threat of thunder. Often they brought devastations in their wake, but they were like catastrophes of nature whose traces are soon forgotten.

But this time it was different. It was not a mere drift over her surface of life-drift of cavalry and foot soldiers, richly caparisoned elephants, white tents and canopies, strings of patient camels bearing the loads of royalty, bands of kettle-drums and flutes, marble domes of mosques, palaces and tombs, like the bubbles of the foaming wine of extravagance; stories of treachery and loyal devotion, of changes of fortune, of dramatic surprises of fate. This time it was the Nation of the West driving its tentacles of machinery deep down into the soil.

Therefore I say to you, it is we who are called as witnesses to give evidence as to what our Nation has been to humanity. We had known the hordes of Mughals and Pathans who invaded India, but we had known them as human races, with their own religions and customs, likes and dislikes-we had never known them as a nation. We. loved and hated them as the occasions arose; we fought for then- and against them, talked with them in a language which was theirs as well as our own, and guided the destiny of the Empire in which we had our active share. But this time we had to deal, not with kings, not with human races, but with a nation-we, who are no nation ourselves.

Now let us, from our own experience, answer the question: what is this Nation?

A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself. It is a spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being. It is a natural regulation of human relationships, so that men can develop ideals of life in co-operation with one another. It has also a political side, but this is only for a special purpose. It is for self-preservation. It is merely the side of power, not of human ideals. And in the early days it had its separate place in society, restricted to the professionals. But when with the help of science and the perfecting of organisation this power begins to grow and brings in harvests of wealth, then it crosses its boundaries with amazing rapidity. For then it goads all its neighbouring societies with greed of material prosperity, and consequent mutual jealousy, and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness. The time comes when it can stop no longer, for the competition grows keener, organisation grows vaster, and selfishness attains supremacy. Trading upon the greed and fear of man, it occupies more and more space in society, and at last becomes its ruling force.

It is just possible that you have lost through habit the consciousness that the living bonds of society are breaking up, and giving place to merely mechanical organisation. But one sees signs of it everywhere. It is owing to this that war has been declared between man and woman, because the natural thread is snapping which holds them together in harmony; because man is driven to professionalism, producing wealth for himself and others, continually turning the wheel of power for his own sake or for the sake of the universal officialdom, leaving woman alone to wither and to die or to

fight her own battle unaided. And thus there, where co-operation is natural, has intruded competition. The very psychology of men and women about their mutual relation is changing and becoming the psychology of the primitive fighting elements, rather than of humanity seeking its completeness through the union based upon mutual self-surrender. For the elements which have lost their living bond of reality have lost the meaning of their existence. Like gaseous particles forced into a too narrow space, they come in continual conflict with each other till they burst the very arrangement which holds them in bondage.

Then look at those who call themselves anarchists, who resent the imposition of power, in any form whatever, upon the individual. The only reason for this is that power has become too abstract-it is a scientific product made in the political laboratory of the Nation, through the dissolution of personal humanity.

And what is the meaning of these strikes in the economic world, which like the prickly shrubs in a barren soil shoot up with renewed vigour each time they are cut down? What but that the wealth-producing mechanism is incessantly growing into vast stature, out of proportion to all other needs of society, and the full reality of man is more and more, crushed under its weight? This state of things inevitably gives rise to eternal feuds among the elements freed from the wholeness and wholesomeness of human ideals, and interminable economic war is waged between capital and labour. For greed of wealth and power can never have a limit, and compromise of self-interest can never attain the final spirit of reconciliation. They must go on breeding jealousy and suspicion to the end-the end which only comes through some sudden catastrophe or a spritual rebirth.

When this organisation of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation, becomes all-powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity. When a father becomes a gambler and his obligations to his family take the secondary place in his mind, then he is no longer a man, but an automaton led by the power of greed. 'then he can do things which, in his normal state of mind, he would be ashamed to do. It is the same thing with society. When it allows itself to be turned into a perfect organisation of power, then there are few crimes it is unable to perpetrate, because success is the object and justification of a machine, while goodness only is the end and purpose of man. When this engine of organisation begins to attain a vast size, and those who are mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then the personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machines, with no twinge of pity or moral responsibility." It may happen that even through this apparatus the moral nature of man tries to assert itself, but the whole series of ropes and pulleys creak and cry, the forces of the human heart become entangled among the forces of the human automaton, and only with difficulty can the moral purpose transmit itself into some tortured shape of result.

This abstract being, the Nation, is ruling India. We have seen in our country some brand of tinned food advertised as entirely made and packed without being touched by hand. This description applies to the governing of India, which is as little touched by the human hand as possible. The governors need not know our language, need not come into personal touch with us except as officials; they can aid or hinder our aspirations from a disdainful distance, they can lead us on a certain path of policy and then pull us back again with the manipulation of office red tape. The newspapers of England, in whose columns London street accidents are recorded with some decency of pathos, need take but the scantiest notice of calamities which happen in India over areas of land sometimes larger than the British Isles.

But we, who are governed, are not a mere abstraction. We, on our side, are individuals with living sensibilities. What comes to us in the shape of a mere bloodless policy may pierce into the very core of our life, may threaten the whole future of our people with a perpetual helplessness of emasculation, and yet may never touch the chord of humanity on the other side, or touch it in the most inadequately feeble manner. Such wholesale and universal acts of fearful responsibility man can never perform, with such a degree of systematic unawareness, where he is an individual human being. These only become possible where the man is represented by an octopus of abstractions, sending out its wriggling arms in all directions of space, and fixing its innumerable suckers even into the far-away future. In this reign of the nation, the governed are pursued by suspicions; and these are the suspicions of a tremendous mass of organised brain and muscle. Punishments are meted out which leave a trail of miseries across a large bleeding tract of the human heart, but these punishments are dealt by a mere abstract force in. which a whole population of a distant country has lost its human personality.

I have not come here, however, to discuss the question as it affects my own country, but as it affects the future of all humanity. It is not a question of the British government, but of government by the Nation-the Nation which is the organised self-interest of a whole people, where it is least human and least spiritual. Our only intimate experience of the Nation is with the British Nation, and as far as the government by the Nation goes there are reasons to believe that it is one of the best. Then, again, we have to consider that the West is necessary to the East. We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore if it be true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of a storm it is nevertheless scattering living seeds that are immortal. *And* when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in western civilisation we shall be in a position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds. Then will come to an end the one-sided dominance which is galling. What is more, we have to recognise that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but to a process of creation to

which various races of the world contributed-the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mohammedans of the West and those of central Asia. Now at last has come the turn of the English to become true to this history and bring to it the tribute of their life, and we neither have the right nor the power to exclude this people from the building of the destiny of India. Therefore what I say about the Nation has more to do with the history of Man than specially with that of India.

This history has come to a stage when the moral man, the complete man, is more and more giving way, almost without knowing it, to make room for the political and the commercial man, the man of the limited purpose. This process, aided by the wonderful progress in science, is assuming gigantic proportion and power, causing the upset of man's moral balance, obscuring his human side under the shadow of soulless organisation. We have felt its iron grip at the root of our life, and for the sake of humanity we must stand up and give warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral vitality.

I have a deep love and a great respect for the British race as human beings. It has produced great-hearted men, thinkers of great thoughts, doers of great deeds. It has given rise to a great literature. I know that these people love justice and freedom, and hate lies. They are clean in their minds, frank in their manners, true in their friendships; in their behaviour they are honest and reliable. The personal experience which I have had of their literary men has roused my admiration not merely for their power of thought or expression but for their chivalrous humanity. We have felt the greatness of this people as we feel the sun; but as for the Nation, it is for us a thick mist of a stifling nature covering the sun itself.

This government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles wherever it is used. It is like a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal, and on that account completely effective. The amount of its power may vary in different engines. Some may even be driven by hand, thus leaving a margin of comfortable looseness in their tension, but in spirit and in method their differences are small.

Our government might have been Dutch, or French, or Portuguese, and its essential features would have remained much the same as they are now. Only perhaps, in some cases, the organisation might not have been so densely perfect, and therefore some shreds of the human might still have been clinging to the wreck, allowing us to deal with something which resembles our own throbbing heart.

Before the Nation carne to rule over us we had other governments which were foreign, and these, like all governments, had some element of the machine in them. But the difference between them and the government by the Nation is like the difference between the hand-loom and the power-loom. In the products of the hand-loom the magic of man's living fingers finds its expression, and its hum harmonises with the music of life. But the power-loom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production.

We must admit that during the personal government of former days there have been instances of tyranny, injustice, and extortion. They caused sufferings and unrest from which we are glad to be rescued. The protection of law is not only a boon, but it is a valuable lesson to us. It is teaching us the discipline which is necessary for the stability of civilisation and for continuity of progress. We are realising through it that there is a universal standard of justice to which all men, irrespective of their caste and colour, have their equal claim.

This reign of law in our present government in India has established order in this vast land inhabited by peoples different in their races and customs. It has made it possible for these peoples to come in closer touch with one another and cultivate a communion of aspiration.

But this desire for a common bond of comradeship among the different races of India has been the work of the spirit of the West, not that of the Nation of the West. Wherever in Asia the people have received the true lesson of the West it is in spite' of the western Nation. Only because Japan had been able to resist the dominance of this western Nation could she acquire the benefit of western civilisation in fullest measure. Though China has been poisoned at the very spring of her moral and physical life by this Nation, her struggle to receive the best lessons of the West may yet be successful if not hindered by the Nation. It was only the other day that Persia woke up from her age-long sleep at the call of the west to be instantly trampled into stillness by the Nation. The same phenomenon prevails in this country also, where the people are hospitable, but the Nation has proved itself to be otherwise, making an Eastern guest feel humiliated to stand before you as a member of the humanity of his own motherland.

In India we are suffering from this conflict between the spirit of the West and the nation of the West. The benefit of western civilisation is doled out to us in a miserly measure by the nation, which tries to regulate the degree of nutrition as near the zero-point of vitality as possible. The portion of education allotted to us is so raggedly insufficient that it ought to outrage the sense of decency of western humanity. We have seen in these countries how the people are encouraged and trained and given every facility to fit themselves for the great movements of commerce and industry spreading over the world, while in India the only assistance we get is merely to be jeered at by the Nation for lagging behind. While depriving us of our opportunities and reducing our education to the minimum required for conducting a foreign government, this Nation pacifies its conscience by calling us names, by sedulously giving currency to the arrogant cynicism that the East is east and the West is west and never the twain shall meet. If we must believe our schoolmaster in his taunt that, after nearly two centuries of his tutelage, India not only remains unfit for self-government but unable to display originality in her intellectual attainments, must we ascribe it to something in the nature of western culture

and our inherent incapacity to receive it or to the judicious niggardliness of the nation that has taken upon itself the white man's burden of civilising the East? That Japanese people have some qualities which we lack we may admit, but that our intellect is naturally unproductive compared to theirs we cannot accept even from them whom it is dangerous for us to contradict.

The truth is that the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the centre of western nationalism; its basis is not social cooperation. It has evolved a perfect organisation of power, but not spiritual idealism. It is like the pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims. With all its heart it cannot bear to see its hunting-grounds converted into cultivated fields. In fact, these nations are fighting among themselves for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests. Therefore the western nation acts like a dam to check the free flow of western civilisation into the country of the No-Nation. Because this civilisation is the civilisation of power, therefore it is exclusive; it is naturally unwilling to open its sources of power to those whom it has selected for its purposes of exploitation.

But all the same, moral law is the law of humanity, and the exclusive civilisation which thrives upon others who are barred from its benefit carries its own death-sentence in its moral limitation. The slaverv that it gives rise to unconsciously drains its own love of freedom dry. Th!e helplessness with which it weighs down its world of victims exerts its force of gravitation every moment upon the power that creates it. And the greater part of the world which is being denuded of its self sustaining life by the Nation will one day become the most terrible of all its burdens, ready to drag it down into the bottom of destruction.

Whenever the Power removes all checks from its path to make its career easy, it triumphantly rides into its ultimate crash of death. Its moral brake becomes slacker every day without its knowing it, and its slippery path of case becomes its path of doom.

Of all things in western civilisation, those which this western Nation has given us in a most generous measure are law and order. While the small feeding-bottle of our education is nearly dry, and sanitation sucks its own thumb in despair, the military organisation, the magisterial offices, the police, the Criminal Investigation Department, the secret spy system, attain to an abnormal girth in their waists, occupying every inch of our country. This is to maintain order. But is not this order merely a negative good? Is it not for giving peoples life greater opportunities of the freedom of development? Its perfection is the perfection of an eggshell whose true value lies in the security it affords to the chick and its nourishment and not in the convenience it offers to the person at the breakfast table.

. Mere administration is unproductive it is not creative for being a living thing. It is a steam-roller formidable in its weight and power, having its uses, but it does not help the soil to become fertile. When after its enormous toil it comes to offer us its boon of peace we can but murmur lender our breath that peace is good, but not more than life, which is God's own great boon'.

On the other hand, our former governments were woefully lacking in many of the advantages of the modern government. But because those were not the governments by the Nation, their texture was loosely woven, leaving big gaps through which our own life sent its threads and imposed its designs. I am quite sure in those days we had things that were extremely distasteful to us. But we know that when we walk barefooted upon ground strewn with gravel, our feet come gradually to adjust themselves to the caprices of the inhospitable earth; while if the tiniest particle of gravel finds its lodgement inside our shoes we can never forget and forgive its intrusion. And these shoes are the government by the Nation-it is tight, it regulates our steps with a closed-up system, within which our feet have only the slightest liberty to make their own adjustments. Therefore, when you produce your statistics to compare the number of gravels which our feet had to encounter in former days with the paucity in the present regime, they hardly touch the real point. It is not a question of the number of outside obstacles but the comparative powerlessness of the individual to cope with them. This narrowness of freedom is an evil which is more radical, not because of its quantity but because of its nature. And we cannot but acknowledge this. paradox: that while the spirit of the West marches under its banner of freedom, the nation of the West forges its iron chains of organisation which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man.

When the humanity of India was not under the government of the Organisation, the elasticity of change was great enough to encourage men of power and spirit to feel that they had their destinies in their own hands. The hope of the unexpected was never absent, and a freer play of imagination, on the part of both the governor and the governed, had its effect in the making of history. We were not confronted with a future, which was a. dead white wall of granite blocks eternally guarding against the expression and extension of out own powers, the hopelessness of which lies in the reason that these powers are becoming atrophied at their very roots by the scientific process of paralysis. For every single individual in the country of the No-Nation is completely in the grip of a whole nation, whose tireless vigilance, being the vigilance of a machine, has not the human power to overlook or to discriminate. At the least pressing of its button the monster organisation becomes all eyes, whose ugly stare , of inquisitiveness cannot be avoided by a single person amongst the immense multitude of the ruled. At the least turn of its screw, by the fraction of an inch, the grip is tightened to the point of suffocation around every man,woman and child of a vast population, for whom no escape is imaginable in their own country or even in any country outside their own It is the continual and stupendous dead pressure of the inhuman upon the living human under which the modern world is groaning. Not merely the subject races,

but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are every day sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetish of nationalism, living in the dense poisonous atmosphere of worldwide suspicion and greed and panic.

I have seen in Japan the voluntary submission of the whole people to the trimming of their minds and clipping of their freedom by their government, which through various educational agencies regulates their thoughts, manufactures their feelings, becomes suspiciously watchful when they show signs of inclining towards the spiritual, leading them through a narrow path not towards what is true but what is necessary for the complete welding of them into one uniform mass according to its own recipe. The people accept this all pervading mental slavery with cheerfulness and pride because of their nervous desire to turn themselves into a machine of power, called the Nation, and emulate other machines in their collective worldliness.

When questioned as to the wisdom of its course, the newly converted fanatic of nationalism answers that so long as nations are rampant in this world we have not the option freely to develop our higher humanity. We must utilise every faculty that we possess to resist the evil by assuming it ourselves in the fullest degree. For the only brotherhood possible in the modern world is the brotherhood of hooliganism.' The recognition of the fraternal bond of love between Japan and Russia, which has lately been celebrated with an immense display of rejoicing in Japan, was not owing to any sudden recrudescence of the spirit of Christianity or of Buddhism, but it was a bond established according to the modern faith in a surer relationship of mutual menace of bloodshedding. Yes, one cannot but acknowledge that these facts are the facts of the world of the nation, and the only moral of it is that all the peoples of the earth should strain their physical, moral and intellectual resources to the utmost to defeat one another in the wrestling match of powerfulness. In ancient days Sparta paid all her attention to becoming powerful; she did become so by crippling her humanity, and died of the amputation.

But it is no consolation to us to know that the weakening of humanity from which the present age is suffering is not limited to the subject races, and that its ravages are even more radical because insidious and voluntary in peoples who are hypnotised into believing that they are free. This bartering of your higher aspirations of life for profit and power has been your own free choice, and I leave you there, at the wreckage of your soul, contemplating your protuberant prosperity. But will you never be called to answer for organising the instincts of self-aggrandisement of whole peoples into perfection and calling it good? I ask you: what disaster has there ever been in the history of man, in its darkest period, like this terrible disaster of the Nation fixing its fangs deep into the naked flesh of the world, taking permanent precautions against its natural relaxation?

You, the people of the West, who have manufactured this abnormality, can you imagine the desolating despair of this haunted world of suffering man possessed by the ghastly abstraction of the organising man? Can you put yourself into the position of the peoples, who seem to have been doomed to an eternal damnation of their own humanity, who not only must suffer continual curtailment of their. manhood, but even raise their voices in paeans of praise for the benignity of a mechanical apparatus in its interminable parody of providence?

Have you not seen, since the commencement of the existence of the Nation, that the dread of it has been the one goblin-dread with which the whole world has been trembling? Wherever there is a dark corner, there is the suspicion of its secret malevolence; and people live in a perpetual distrust of their back where they have no eyes. Every sound of a footstep, every rustle of movement in the neighbourhood, sends a thrill of terror all around. And this terror is the parent of all that is base in man's nature. It makes one almost openly unashamed of inhumanity. Clever lies become matters of self-congratulation. Solemn pledges become a farce-laughable for their very solemnity. The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymn:, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril. Its one wish is to trade on the feebleness of the rest of the world, like some insect: that :ire bred in the paralysed flesh of victims kept just enough alive to make them toothsome and nutritious. Therefore it is ready to send its poisonous fluid into the vitals of the other living peoples who not being nations, are harmless For this the Nation has had and still has its richest pasture in Asia. Great China, rich with her ancient wisdom and social ethics, her discipline of industry and self-control, is like a whale awakening the lust of spoil in the heart of the Nation. She is already carrying in her quivering flesh harpoon; sent by the unerring aim of the Nation, the creature of science arid selfishness Her pitiful attempt to shake off her traditions of humanity her social ideals, and spend her last exhausted resources in drilling herself into modern efficiency, is thwarted at every step by the Na tightening its financial ropes round her, trying to drag her up on the shore and cut her into pieces, and then go and offer public thanksgiving to God for supporting the ore existing evil and shattering the possibility of a new one. And for all this the Nation has been claiming the gratitude of history and all eternity for its exploitation. ordering its band of praise to be struck up from en to end of the world declaring it self to be the salt of the earth, the flower of humanity, the blessing of God hurled with all He force upon the flaked skulls of the world of No-.Nations.

I know what your advice will be. You will say form yourselves into a nation, and resist this encroachment of the Nation. But is this true advice, that of a man to a man? Why should this been necessity? I could well believe you if you had said: be more good, more just, more true in your relation to man; control your greed, make your life wholesome in its

simplicity and let your consciousness of the divine in humanity be more. perfect in its expression. But must you say that it is not the soul, but the machine, which is of the utmost value to ourselves, and that man's salvation depends upon his disciplining himself into a perfection of the dead rhythm of wheels and counterwheels, that machine must be pitted against machine, and nation against nation, in an endless bull-fight of politics[7]

You say: these machines will come into an agreement for their mutual protection, based upon a conspiracy of fear. But will this federation of steam-boilers supply you with a soul, a soul which has her conscience and her God? What is to happen to that larger part of the world where fear will have no hand in restraining you? Whatever safety they now enjoy, those countries of No Nation, from the unbridled licence of forge and hammer and turn-screw, results from the mutual jealousy of the powers. But when, instead of being numerous separate machines they become riveted into one organised gregariousness of gluttony, commercial and political, what remotest chance of hope will remain for those others, who have lived and suffered, have loved and worshipped, have thought deeply and worked with meekness, but whose only crime has been that they have not organised?

But, you say, 'That does not matter, the unfit must go to the" wall-they shall die, and this is science.'

No, for the sake of your own salvation, I say, they shall *live*, and this is truth. It is extremely bold of me to say so, but I assert that man's world is a moral world, not because we blindly agree to believe it, but because it is so in truth which would be dangerous for us to ignore. And this moral nature of mail cannot be divided into convenient compartments for its preservation. You cannot secure it for your home consumption with protective tariff walls, while in foreign parts making it enormously accommodating in its free trade of licence.

Has not this truth already come hone to you now, when this cruel war has driven its claws into the vitals of Europe, when her hoard of wealth is bursting into smoke and her humanity is shattered into bits on her battlefields? You ask in amazement: what has she done to deserve this? The answer is that the West leas been systematically petrifying her moral nature in order to lay a solid foundation for her gigantic abstractions of efficiency. She has all along been starving the life of the personal man into that of the professional.

In your mediaeval age in Europe, the simple and the natural man, with all his violent passions and desires, was engaged in trying to find out a reconciliation in the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. All through the turbulent career of her vigorous youth the temporal and the spiritual forces both acted strongly upon her nature, and were moulding it into completeness of moral personality. Europe owes all her greatness in humanity to that period of discipline-the discipline of the man in his human integrity.

Then came the age of intellect, of science. We all know that intellect is impersonal. Our life and our heart are one with us, but our mind can be detached from the personal man and then only can it freely move in its world of thoughts. Our intellect is an ascetic who wears no clothes, takes no food, knows no sleep, has no wishes, feels no love or hatred or pity for human limitations, who only reasons unmoved through the vicissitudes of life. It burrows to the roots of things, because it has no personal concern with the thing itself- The grammarian walks straight through all poetry and goes to the root of words without obstruction, because he is seeking not reality, but law. When he fine the law, he is able to teach people how to master words. This is a power-the power which fulfils some special usefulness, some particular need of man.

Reality is the harmony which gives to the component parts of a thing the equilibrium of the whole. You break it, and have in your hands the nomadic atoms fighting against one another; therefore unmeaning. Those who covet power try to get mastery of these aboriginal fighting elements, and through some narrow channels force them into some violent service for some particular needs of man.

This satisfaction of man's needs is a great thing. It gives him freedom in the material world. It confers on him the benefit of a greater range of time and space. He can do things in a shorter time and occupies a larger space with more thoroughness of advantage.

Therefore he can easily outstrip those who live in a world of a slower time and of space less fully occupied.

This progress of power attains more and more rapidity of pace. And, for the reason that it is a detached part of man, it soon outruns the complete humanity. The moral man remains behind, because it has to deal with the whole reality, not merely with the law of things, which is impersonal and therefore abstract.

Thus man, with his mental and material power far outgrowing his moral strength, is like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him, making normal communication difficult to establish. This greedy head, with its huge dental organisation, has been munching all the topmost foliage of the world, but the nourishment is too late in reaching his digestive organs, and his heart is suffering from want of blood. Of this present disharmony in man's nature the West seems to have been blissfully unconscious. The enormity of its material success has diverted all its attention towards self-congratulation on its bulk. The optimism of its logic goes on basing the calculations of its good fortune upon the indefinite prolongation of its railway lines towards eternity. It is superficial enough to think that all tomorrows are merely todays, with the repeated additions of twenty-four hours. It has no fear of the chasm, which is opening wider every day, between man's ever growing storehouses and the emptiness of his hungry humanity. Logic does not know that, under the lowest bed of endless strata of wealth and comforts,

earthquakes are being hatched to restore the balance of the moral world; and one day the gaping golf of spiritual vacuity will draw into its bottom the store of things that have their eternal love for the dust.

Man in his fulness is not powerful, but perfect Therefore, to turn hire into mere power, you have to curtail his soul as much as possible. When we are fully human, we cannot fly at one another's throats; our instincts of social life, our traditions of moral ideals stand in the way. If you want me to take to butchering human beings, you must break up that wholeness of my humanity through some discipline which makes my will dead, my thoughts numb, my movements automatic, and then from the dissolution of the complex personal man will come out that abstraction, that destructive force, which has no relation to human truth, and therefore can be easily brutal or mechanical. Take away man from his natural surroundings, from the fulness of his communal life, with all its living associations of beauty and love and social obligations, and you will be able to turn him into so many fragments of a machine for the production of wealth on a gigantic scale. Turn a tree into a log and it will bum for you, but it will never bear living flowers and fruit.

This process of dehumanising has been going on in commerce and politics. And out of the long birth-throes of mechanical energy has been born this fully developed apparatus of magnificent power .and surprising appetite which has been christened in the West as the Nation. As I have hinted before, because of its quality of abstraction it has, with the greatest ease, gone far ahead of the complete moral man. And having the conscience of a ghost and the callous perfection of all automaton, it is causing disasters With which the volcanic dissipations of the youthful moon would be ashamed to be brought into comparison. As a result, the suspicion of man for man stings all the limbs of this civilisation like the hairs of the nettle. Each country is casting its net of espionage into the slimy bottom of the others, fishing for their secrets, the treacherous secrets which brew in the oozy depths of diplomacy. And what is their secret service but the nation's underground trade in kidnapping, murder and treachery and all the ugly crimes bred in the depth of rottenness? Because each nation has its own history of thieving and lies and broken faith, therefore there can only flourish international suspicion and jealousy, and international moral shame becomes anaemic to a degree of ludicrousness. The nation's bagpipe of righteous indignation has so changed its tune according to the variation of time and to the altered groupings of the alliances of diplomacy, that it can be enjoyed with amusement as the variety performance of the political music hall.

I am just coming from my visit to Japan, where I exhorted this young nation to take its stand upon the higher ideals of humanity and never to follow the West in its acceptance of the organised selfishness of Nationalism as its religion, never to gloat upon the feebleness of its neighbours, never to be unscrupulous in its behaviour to the weak where it can be gloriously mean with impunity, while turning its right cheek of brighter Humanity for the kiss of admiration to those who have the power to deal it a blow. Some of the newspapers praised my utterances for their poetical qualities, while adding with a leer that it was the poetry of a defeated people. I felt they were right. Japan had been taught in a modern school the lesson how to become powerful. The schooling is done and she must enjoy the fruits of her lessons. The West in the voice of her thundering cannon had said at the door of Japan. let there be a nation-and there was a Nation. And now that it has come into existence, why do you not feel in your heart of hearts a pure feeling of gladness and say that it is good? Why is it that I saw in an English paper an expression of bitterness at Japan's boasting of her superiority of civilisation-the thing that the British, along with other nations, have been carrying on for ages without blushing? Because the idealism of selfishness must keep itself drunk with a continual dose of self-laudation. But the same vices which seem so natural and innocuous in its own life make it surprised and angry at their unpleasantness when seen in other nations. Therefore, when you see the Japanese nation, created in your own image, launched in its career of national boastfulness, you shake your head and say, it is not good. Has it not been one of the causes that raise the cry on these shores for preparedness to meet one more power of evil with a greater power of injury? Japan protests that she. has her *bushido,* that she can never be treacherous to America to whom she owes her gratitude. But you find it difficult to believe her-for the wisdom of the Nation is not in its faith in humanity but in its complete distrust. You say to yourself that it is not with Japan of the *bushido,* the Japan of the moral ideals, that you have to deal-it is with the abstraction of the popular selfishness, it is with the Nation; and Nation can only trust Nation where their interests coalesce, or at least do not conflict. In fact your instinct tells you that the advent of another people into the arena of nationality makes another addition to the evil which contradicts all that is highest in Man and proves by its success that unscrupulousness is the way to prosperity-and goodness is good for the weak and God is the only remaining consolation of the defeated.

Yes, this is the logic of the Nation. And it will never heed the voice of truth and goodness. It will go on its ring-dance of moral corruption, linking steel unto steel, and machine unto machine, trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man.

But we delude ourselves into thinking that humanity in these modern days is more to the front than ever before. The reason for this self-delusion is because man is served with the necessaries of life in greater profusion and his physical ills are being alleviated with more efficacy. But the chief part of this is done, not by moral sacrifice, but by intellectual power. In quantity it is great, but it springs from the surface and spreads over the surface. Knowledge and efficiency are powerful in their outward effect, but they are the servants of man, not the man himself. Their service is like the service in a hotel, where it is elaborate, but the host is absent; it is

more convenient than hospitable.

Therefore we must not forget that the scientific organisations vastly spreading in all directions are strengthening our power, but not our humanity. With the growth of power the cult of the self-worship of the Nation grows in ascendancy, and the individual willingly allows the Nation to take donkey-rides upon his back; and there happens the anomaly which must have such disastrous effects, that the individual worships with all sacrifices a god which is morally much inferior to himself. This could never have been possible if the god had been as real as the individual.

Let me give an illustration of this point. In some parts of India it has been enjoined as an act of great piety for a widow to go without food and water on a particular day every fortnight. This often leads to cruelty, unmeaning and inhuman. And yet men are not by nature cruel to such a degree. But this piety being a mere unreal abstraction completely- deadens the moral sense of the individual, just as the man who would not hurt an animal unnecessarily would cause horrible suffering to a large number of innocent creatures when he drugs his feelings with the abstract idea of 'sport'! Because these ideas are creations of our intellect, because they are logical classifications, therefore they can so easily hide in their mist the personal man.

And the idea of the nation is one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion-in fact can feel dangerously resentful if it is pointed out.

But can this go on indefinitely, continually producing barrenness of moral insensibility upon a large tract of our living nature? Can it escape its nemesis for ever? Has this giant power of mechanical organisation no limit in this world against which it may shatter itself all the more completely because of its terrible strength and velocity? Do you believe that evil can be permanently kept in check by competition with evil, and that conference of prudence can keep the devil chained in its makeshift cage of mutual agreement?

This European war of Nations is the war of retribution. Man, the person, must protest for his very life against the heaping up of things where there should be the heart, and systems and policies where there should flow living human relationship. The time has come when, for the sake of the whole outraged world, Europe should fully know in her own person the terrible absurdity of the thing called the Nation.

The Nation has thriven long upon mutilated humanity. Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets, ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism. Human society grew more and more into a marionette show of politicians, soldiers, manufacturers and bureaucrats, pulled by wire arrangements of wonderful efficiency.

But the apotheosis of selfishness can never make its interminable breed of hatred and greed, fear and hypocrisy, suspicion and tyranny, an end in themselves. These monsters grow into huge shapes but never into harmony. And this Nation may grow on to an unimaginable corpulence, not of a living body, but of steel and steam and office buildings, till its deformity can contain no longer its ugly voluminousness-till it begins to crack and gape, breathe gas and fire in gasps, and its death-rattles sound in cannon roars. In this war the death-throes of the Nation have commenced. Suddenly, all its mechanism going mad, it has begun the dance of the Furies, shattering its own limbs, scattering them into the dust. It is the fifth act of the tragedy of the unreal.

Those who have any faith in Man cannot but fervently hope that the tyranny of the Nation will not be restored to all its former teeth and claws, to its far-reaching iron arms and its immense inner cavity, all stomach and no heart; that man will have his new birth, in the freedom of his individuality, from the enveloping vagueness of abstraction.

The veil has been raised, and in this frightful war the West has stood face to face with her own creation to which she had offered her soul. She must know what it truly is.

She had never let herself suspect what slow decay and decomposition were secretly going on in her moral nature, which often broke out in doctrines of scepticism, but still oftener and in still more dangerously subtle manner showed itself in her unconsciousness of the mutilation and insult that she had been inflicting upon a vast part of the world. Now she must know the truth nearer home.

And then there will come from her own children those who will break themselves free from the slavery of this illusion, this perversion of brotherhood founded upon self-seeking, those who will own themselves as God's children and as no bond-slaves of machinery, which turns souls into commodities and life into compartments, which, with its iron claws, scratches out the heart of the world and knows not what it has done.

And we of the no nations of the world, whose heads have been bowed to the dust, will know that this dust is more sacred than the bricks which build the pride of power. For this dust is fertile of life, and of beauty and worship. We shall thank God that we were made to wait in silence through the night of despair, had to bear the insult of the proud and the strong man's burden, yet ail through it, though our hearts quaked with doubt and fear, never could we blindly believe in the salvation which machinery offered to man, but we held fast to our trust in God and the truth of the human soul. And we can still cherish the hope that, when power becomes ashamed to occupy its throne and is ready to make way for love, when the morning comes for cleansing the blood-stained steps of the Nation along the highroad of humanity, we shall be called upon to bring our own vessel of sacred water-the

water of worship-to sweeten the history of man into purity, and with its sprinkling make the trampled dust of the centuries blessed with fruitfulness.

Nationalism In India

OUR real problem in India is not political. It is social. This is a condition not only prevailing in India, but among all nations. I do not believe in an exclusive political interest. Politics in the. West have dominated western ideals, and we in India are trying to imitate you. We have to remember that in Europe, where peoples had their racial unity from the beginning, and where natural resources were insufficient for the inhabitants, the civilisation has naturally taken on the character of political and commercial aggressiveness. For on the one hand they had no internal complications, and on the other they had to deal with neighbours who were strong and rapacious. To have perfect combination among themselves and a watchful attitude of animosity against others was taken as the solution of their problems. In former days they organised and plundered; in the present age the same spirit continues-and they organise and exploit the whole world.

But from the earliest beginnings of history India has had her own problem constantly before her-it is the race problem. Each nation must be conscious of its mission, and eve in India must realise that we cut a poor figure when we try to be political, simply because we have not yet been finally able to accomplish what was set before us by our providence.

This problem of race unity which we have been trying to solve for so many years has likewise to be faced by you here in America. Many people in this country ask me what is happening to the caste distinctions in India. But when this question is asked me, it is usually done with a superior air. And I feel tempted to put the same question to our American critics with a slight modification: 'What have you done with the Red Indian and the Negro?' For you have not got over you?, attitude of caste towards them. You have used violent methods to keep aloof from other races, but until you have solved the question, here in America, you have no right to question India.

In spite of our great difficulty, however, India has done something. She has tried to make an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them where these exist, and yet seek for some basis of unity. This basis has come through our saints, like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya[1] and others, preaching one God to all races of India.

In finding the solution of our problem we shall have helped to solve the world problem as well. What India has been, the whole world is now. The whole world is becoming one country through scientific facility. And the moment is arriving when you must also find a basis of unity which is not political. If India can offer to the world her solution, it will be a contribution to humanity. There is only one history-the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one. And we are content in India to suffer for such a great cause.

Each individual has his self-love. Therefore his brute instinct leads him to fight with others in the sole pursuit of his self-interest. But man has also his higher instincts of sympathy and mutual help. The people who are lacking in this higher moral power and who therefore cannot combine in fellowship with one another must perish or live in a state of degradation. Only those peoples have survived and achieved civilisation who have this spirit of co-operation strong in them. So we find that from the beginning of history men had to choose between fighting with one another and combining, between serving their own interest or the common interest of all.

In our early history, when the geographical limits of each country and also the facilities of communication were small, this problem was comparatively small in dimension. It was sufficient for men to develop their sense of unit within their area of segregation. In those days they combined among themselves and fought against others. But it was this moral spirit of combination which was the true basis of their greatness, and this fostered their art, science and religion. At that early time the most important fact that man lead to take count of was the fact of the members of one particular race of men coming in close contact with one another. Those who truly grasped this fact through their higher nature made their mark in history.

The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of men have come close together. And again we are confronted with two alternatives. The problem is whether the different groups of peoples shall go on fighting with one another or find out some true basis of reconciliation and mutual help; whether it will be interminable competition or co-operation.

I have no hesitation in saying that those who are gifted with the moral power of love and vision of spiritual unity, who have the least feeling of enmity against aliens, and the sympathetic insight to place themselves in the position of others, will be the fittest to take their permanent place in the age that is lying before us, and those who are constantly developing their instincts for fight and intolerance of aliens will be eliminated. For this is the problem before us, and we have to prove our humanity by solving it through the help of our higher nature. The gigantic organisations for hurting others and warding off their blows, for making money by dragging others back, will not help us. On the contrary, by their crushing weight, their enormous cost and their deadening effect upon living humanity, they will seriously impede our freedom in the larger life of a higher civilisation.

During the evolution of the Nation the moral culture of brotherhood was limited by geographical boundaries, because at that time those boundaries were true. Now they have become imaginary lines of tradition divested of the qualities of real obstacles. So the time has come when Man's moral nature must deal with this great fact with all seriousness or perish. The first impulse of this change of circumstance has

1.Nanak (1469-1533), Kabir (1440-1518), Chaitanya (1485-1533).

been the churning up of man's baser passions of greed and cruel hatred. If this persists indefinitely, and armaments go on exaggerating themselves to unimaginable absurdities, and machines and storehouses envelop this fair earth with their dirt and smoke and ugliness, then it will end in a conflagration of suicide. Therefore man will have to exert all his power of love and clarity of vision to snake another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality. The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings.

If it is given at all to the West to struggle out of these tangles of the lower slopes to the spiritual summit of humanity then I cannot but think that it is the special mission of America to fulfil this hope of God and man. You are the country of expectation, desiring something else than what is. Europe has her subtle habits of mind and her conventions. But America, as yet, has come to no conclusions, I realise how much America is untrammelled by the traditions of the past, and I can appreciate that experimentalism is a sign of America's youth. The foundation of her glory is in the future, rather than in the past, and if one is gifted with the power of clairvoyance, one will be able to love the America that is to be.

America is destined to justify western civilisation to the East. Europe has lost faith in humanity, and has become distrustful and sickly. America, on the other hand, is not pessimistic or blase. You know, as a people, that there is such a thing as a better and a best, and that knowledge drives you on. There are habits that are not merely passive but aggressively arrogant. They are not like mere walls, but are like hedges of stinging nettles. Europe has been cultivating these hedges of habits for long years, till they have grown round her dense and strong and high. The pride of her traditions has sent its roots deep into her heart. I do not wish to contend that it is unreasonable. But pride in every form breeds blindness at the end. Like all artificial stimulauts its first effect is a heightening of consciousness, and then with the increasing dosage it muddles it and brings an exultation that is misleading.

Europe has gradually grown hardened in her pride in all her outer and inner habits. She not only cannot forget that she is western, but she takes every opportunity to hurl this fact against others to humiliate them. This is why she is growing incapable of imparting to the East what is best in herself, and of accepting in a right spirit the wisdom that the East has stored for centuries.

In America national habits and traditions have not had time to spread their clutching roots round your hearts. You have constantly felt and complained of your disadvantages when you compared your nomadic restlessness with the settled traditions of Europe—the Europe which can show her picture of greatness to the best advantage because she can fix it against the background of the past. But in this present age of transition, when a new era of civilisation is sending its trumpet-call to all peoples of the world across an unlimited future, this very freedom of detachment. will enable you to accept its invitation and to achieve the goal for which Europe began her journey but lost herself mid-way. For she was tempted out of her path by her pride of power and greed of possession.

Not merely your freedom froth habits of mind in individuals, but also the freedom of your history from all unclean entanglements, fits you in your career of holding the banner of civilisation of the future. All the great nations of Europe have their victims in other parts of the world. This not only deadens their moral sympathy but also their intellectual sympathy, which is so necessary for the understanding of races which are different from one's own. Englishmen can never truly understand India, because their minds are not disinterested with regard to that country. If you compare England with Germany or France you will find she has produced the smallest number of scholars who have studied Indian literature and philosophy with any amount of sympathetic insight or thoroughness. This attitude of apathy and contempt is natural where the relationship is abnormal and founded upon national selfishness and pride. But your history has been disinterested, and that is why you have been able to help Japan in her lessons in western civilisation, and that is why China can look upon you with the best confidence in this, her darkest period of danger. In fact you are carrying all the responsibility of a great future because you are untrammelled by the grasping miserliness of a past. Therefore, of all countries of the earth, America has to be fully conscious of this future; her vision must not be obscured and her faith in humanity must be strong with the strength of youth.

A parallelism exists between America and India- the parallelism of welding together into one body various races.

In my country we have been seeking to find out something common to all races, which will prove their real unity. No nation looking for a mere political or commercial basis of unity will find such a solution sufficient. Alen of thought and power will discover the spiritual unity, will realise it, and preach it.

India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.

'The educated Indian at present is trying to absorb some lessons from history contrary to the lessons of our ancestors. The East, in fact, is attempting to take unto itself a history, which is not the outcome of its own living. Japan, for example, thinks she is getting powerful through adopting western methods but, after she has exhausted her inheritance, only the borrowed weapons of civilisation will remain to her. She will not have developed herself from within.

Europe has her past. Europe's strength therefore lies in her history. We in India mast make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people's history, and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide. When you borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your life.

And therefore I believe that it does India no good to compete with western civilisation in its own field. But we shall be more than compensated if, in spite of the insults heaped upon us, we follow. our own destiny.

There are lessons which impart information or train our minds for intellectual pursuits. These are simple and can be acquired and used with advantage. But there are others which affect our deeper nature and change our direction of life. Before we accept them and pay their value by selling our own inheritance, we must pause and think deeply. In man's history there come ages of fireworks which dazzle us by their force and movement. They laugh not only at our modest household lamps but also at the eternal stars. But let its not for that provocation be precipitate to our desire to dismiss our lamps. Let its patiently bear our present insult and realise that these fireworks have splendour but not permanence, because of the extreme explosiveness which is the cause of their power, and also of their exhaustion. They are spending a fatal quantity of energy and substance compared to their gain and production.

Anyhow, our ideals have been evolved through our own history, and even if we wished we could only make poor fireworks of them because their materials are different from yours, as is also their moral purpose. If we cherish the desire of paying our all to buy a political nationality it will be as absurd as if Switzerland had staked her existence on her ambition to build up a navy powerful enough to compete with that of England. The mistake that we make is in thinking that man's channel of greatness is only one-the one which has made itself painfully evident for the time being by its depth of insolence.

We must know for certain that there is a future before us and that future is waiting for those who are rich in moral ideals and not in mere things. And it is the privilege of man to work for fruits that are beyond his immediate reach, and to adjust his life not in slavish conformity to the examples of some present success or even to his own prudent past, limited in its aspiration, but to an infinite future bearing in its heart the ideas of our highest expectations.

We must recognise that it is providential that the West has come to India. And yet someone must show the East to the West, and convince the West that the East has her contribution to make to the history of civilisation. India is no beggar of the West. And yet even though the West may think she is, I am not for thrusting off western civilisation and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association. If Providence wants England to be the channel of that communication, of that deeper association, I am willing to accept it with all humility. I have great faith in human nature, and I think the West will find its true mission. I speak bitterly of western civilisation when I am conscious that it is betraying its trust and thwarting its own purpose. The West must not make herself a curse to the world by using her power for her own selfish needs but, by teaching the ignorant and helping the weak, she should save herself from the worst danger that the strong is liable to incur by making the feeble acquire power enough to resist her intrusion. And also she must not make her materialism to be the final thing, but must realise that she is doing a service in freeing the spiritual being from the tyranny of matter.

I am not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of all nations. What is the Nation'

It is the aspect of a whole people as an organised power. This organisation incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort after strength and efficiency drains man's energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. For thereby man's power of sacrifice is diverted from his ultimate object, which is moral, to the maintenance of this organisation, which is mechanical. Yet in this he feels all the satisfaction of moral exaltation and therefore becomes supremely dangerous to humanity. fie feels relieved of the urging of his conscience when he can transfer his responsibility to this machine which is the creation of his intellect and not of his complete moral personality. By this device the people which loves freedom perpetuates slavery in a large portion of the world with the comfortable feeling of pride in having done its duty; men who are naturally just can be cruelly unjust both in their act and their thought, accompanied by a feeling that they are helping the world to receive its deserts; men who are honest can blindly go on robbing others of their human rights for self-aggrandisement, all the while abusing the deprived for not deserving better treatment. We have seen in our everyday life even small organisations of business and profession produce callousness of feeling in men who are not naturally bad, and we can well imagine what a moral havoc it is causing in a world where whole peoples are furiously organising themselves for gaining wealth and power.

Nationalism is a great menace. It is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles. And inasmuch as we have been ruled and dominated by a nation that is strictly political in. its attitude, we have tried to develop within ourselves, despite our inheritance form the past, a belief in our eventual political desitny.

There are different patties in India, with different ideals. Some are straggling for political independence. Others think that the time has not arrived for that, and yet believe that India should have the rights that the English colonies have. They wish to gain autonomy as far as possible.

In the beginning of the history of political agitation in India there was not the Conflict between parties which there is today. At that time there was ? party known as the Indian

Congress;[1] they had no real programme. They had a few grievances tot, redress by the authorities. They wanted larger representation in the Council House, and more freedom in Municipal Government. They wanted scraps of things, but they had no constructive ideal. Therefore I was lacking in enthusiasm for their methods. It was my conviction that what India most needed was constructive work coming from within herself. In this work we must take all risks and go on doing the duties which by right are ours, though in the teeth of persecution, winning moral victory at every step, by our failure and suffering. We must show those who are over us that we have in ourselves the strength of moral power, the power to suffer for truth. Where we have nothing to show, we have only to beg. It would be mischievous if the gifts Are wish for were granted to us at once, and I have told my countrymen, time and again, to combine for the work of creating opportunities to give vent to our spirit of self-sacrifice, and not for the purpose of begging.

The party, however, lost power because the people soon came to realise how futile was the half policy adopted by them. The party split= and there arrived the Extremists, who advocated independence of action, and discarded the begging method—the easiest method of relieving one's mind from his responsibility towards his county. Their ideals were based on western history. They had no sympathy with the special problems of India. They did not recognise the patent fact that there were causes in our social organisation which made the Indian incapable of coping with the alien. What should we do if, for any reason, England was driven away? We should simply be victims for other nations. The same social weaknesses would prevail. The thing we in India have to think of is this: to remove those social customs and ideals which have generated a want of self-respect and a complete dependence on those above us—a state of affairs which has been brought about entirely by the domination in India of the caste system, and the blind and lazy habit of relying upon the authority of traditions that are incongruous anachronisms in the present age.

Once Again I draw your attention to the difficulties India has had to encounter and her struggle to overcome them. Her problem was the problem of the world in miniature. India is too vast in its area and too diverse in its races. It is many countries packed in one geographical receptacle. It is just the opposite of what Europe truly is; namely, one country made into many. Thus Europe in its culture and growth has had the advantage of the strength of the many as well as the strength of the one. India, on the contrary, being naturally many, yet adventitiously one, has all along suffered from the looseness of its diversity and the feebleness of its unity. A true unity is. like a round globe; it rolls on, carrying its burden easily. But diversity is a many-cornered thing which has to be dragged arid pushed with all force. Be it said to the credit of India that this diversity was not her own creation; she has had to accept it as a fact from the beginning of her history. In America and Australia, Europe has simplified her problem by almost exterminating the original population. Even in the present age this spirit of extermination is making itself manifest, in the inhospitable shutting out of aliens, by those who themselves were aliens in the lands they now occupy. But India tolerated difference of races from the first, and that spirit of toleration has acted all through her history.

Her caste system is the outcome of this spirit of toleration. For India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as the circumstances *permitted.* This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.

India had felt that diversity of races there must be and should be, whatever may be its drawbacks, and you can never coerce nature into your narrow limits of convenience without paying one day very dearly for it. (n this India was right: but what she failed to realise was that in human beings differences are not like the physical barriers of mountains, fixed for ever—they are fluid with life's flow, they are changing their courses and their shapes and volumes.

Therefore in her caste regulations India recognised differences, but not the mutability which is the law of life. In trying to avoid collisions she set up boundaries of immovable walls, thus giving to her numerous races the negative benefit of peace and order but not the positive opportunity of expansion and movement. She accepted nature *where it* produces diversity, but ignored it where it uses that diversity to,- its world-game of infinite permutations and combinations. She treated life in all truth where it is manifold, but insulted it where it is ever moving. Therefore Life departed from her social system and in its place she is worshipping with all ceremony the magnificent cage of countless compartments that she has manufactured.

The same thing happened where she tried to ward off the collisions of trade interests. She associated different trades and professions with different castes. This had the effect of allaying for good the interminable jealousy and hatred of competition—the competition which breeds cruelty and makes the atmosphere thick with lies and deception. In this also India laid all her emphasis upon the law of heredity, ignoring the law of mutation, and thus gradually reduced arts into crafts and genius into skill.

However, what western observers fail to discern is that in her caste system India in all seriousness accepted her responsibility to solve the race problem in such a manner as to avoid all friction, and yet to afford each race freedom within its boundaries. Let us admit India has not in this achieved .a full measure of success. But this you must also concede: that the West, being more favourably situated as to homogeneity of races, has never given her attention to this problem, and whenever confronted with it she has tried to make it easy by ignoring it altogether. And this is the source of her anti-Asiatic agitations for depriving aliens of their right to earn their honest living on these shores. In most of your colonies you only admit them oil condition of their

1. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885.
2. In 1907, at the annual session of the Indian National Congress, held at Surat.

accepting the menial positions of liewers of wood and drawers of water. Either you shut your doors against the aliens or reduce them into slavery. And tills is your solution to the problem of race-conflict. Whatever may be its merits you will have to admit that it does not spring from the higher impulses of civilisation but from the lower passions of greed and hatred. You say this is htiman nature-and India also thought she knew human nature when she strongly barricaded leer race distinctions by the fixed barriers of social gradations. But we have found out to our cost that ? -lman nature is not what it seems, but what it is in truth; which is in its infinite possibilities. And whey we in our blindness insult humanity for its ragged appearance it sheds its disguise to disclose to Lis that we have insulted our God. The degradation which we cast upon others in our pride or self-interest degrades our own humanity-and this is the punishment which is most terrible, because we do not detect it till it is too late.

Not only in your relation with aliens but with the different sections of your own society you have not achieved harmony of reconciliation. The spirit of conflict and competition is allowed the full freedom of its reckless career. And because its genesis is tile greed of wealth and power it can never come to any other end but to a violent death. In India the production of commodities was brought under tlle law of social adjustments. Its basis was co-operation, leaving for its object the perfect satisfaction of social needs. But iii tile West it is guided by the impulse of competition, whose end is the gain of wealth for individuals. But the individual is like the geometrical line; it is length without breadth. It has not got the depth to be able to hold anything permanently. Therefore its greed or gain can never come to finality. tie its lengthening process of growth it call cross other lines and cause entanglements, but will ever go on missing the ideal of completeness in its thinness of isolation.

In all our physical appetites we recognise a limit. We knew that to exceed that limit is to exceed the limit of Health. But lips this lust for wealth and power no bounds b-=doiid which is death's dominion? In these national carnivals of materialism die not the western peoples spending most of their vigil energy in merely producing things and neglecting the creation of ideals? And call a civilisation ignore the law of moral health and go oil in its endless process of inflation by gorging upon material things? Mail ill his social ideals naturally tries to regulate lets appetites, subordinating] them to the higher purpose of his nature. But in the economic world cur appetites follow no other restrictions but those of supply acid demand which can be artificially fostered, affording individuals opportunities for indulgence in din endless feast of grossness. in India our social institincts imposed restriction upon Oil" appetites- extreme Of repression- But in the West the spirit of economic organisation with no moral purpose goads the people into the perpetual pursuit of wealth; but has this no wholesome limit?

The ideals that strive to take form in social institutions have two objects. One is to regulate our passions and appetites for the harmonious development of man, and the other is to help him to cultivate disinterested love for his fellow-creatures. Therefore society is the expression of those moral and spiritual aspirations of man which belong to his higher nature.

Our food is creative, it builds our body; but not so wine, which stimulates. Our social ideals-create the human world, but when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power then in that state of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. Therefore political freedom does not give us freedom when our mind is not free. An automobile does not create freedom of movement, because it is a mere machine. When I myself am free I can use the automobile for the purpose of my freedom.

We must never forget in the present day that those people who have got their political freedom are not necessarily free; they are merely powerful. The passions which are unbridled in them are creating huge organisations of slavery in the disguise of freedom. Those who have made the gain of money their highest end are unconsciously selling their life and soul to rich persons.or to the combinations that represent money. Those who are enamoured of their political power and gloat over their extension of dominion over foreign races gradually surrender their own freedom and humanity to the organisations necessary for holding other peoples in slavery. In the so-called free countries the majority of the people are not free; they are driven by the minority to a goal which is not even known to them. This becomes possible only because people do not acknowledge moral and spiritual freedom as their object. They create huge eddies with their passions, and they feel dizzily inebriated with the mere velocity of their whirling movement taking that to be freedom. But the doom which is waiting to overtake them is as certain as death-for man's truth is moral truth and his emancipation is in the spiritual life.

The general opinion of the majority of the present-day nationalists in India is that we have come to a final completeness in our social and spiritual ideals, the task of the constructive work of society having been done several thousand years before we were born, and that now we are free to employ all our activities in the political direction. We never dream of blaming our social inadequacy as the origin of our present helplessness, for we have accepted as the creed of our nationalism that this social system has been perfected for all time to come by our ancestors, who had the superhuman vision of all eternity and supernatural power for making infinite provision for future ages. Therefore, for all our miseries and shortcomings, we hold responsible the historical surprises that burst upon us from outside. This is the reason why we think that our one task is to build a political miracle of freedom upon the quicksand of social slavery. In fact we want to dam up the true course of our own historical stream, and only borrow power from the sources of other peoples' history.

Those of us in India who have come under the delusion that mere political freedom will make us free have accepted their lessons from the West as the gospel truth and lost their faith in humanity. We must remember that whatever weakness we cherish in our society will become the source of danger in politics. The same inertia which leads us to our idolatry of dead forms in social institutions will create in our politics prison-houses with immovable walls. The narrowness of sympathy which makes it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority will assert itself in our politics in creating the tyranny of injustice.

When our nationalists talk about ideals they forget that the basis of nationalism is wanting. The very people who are upholding these ideals are themselves the most conservative in their social practice. Nationalists say, for example: look at Switzerland where, in spite of race differences, the people have solidified into a nation. Yet, remember that in Switzerland the races can mingle, they can intermarry, because they are of the same blood. In India there is no common birthright. And when we talk of western nationality we forgot that the nations there do not have that physical repulsion, one for the other, that we have between different castes. Have we an instance in the whole world where a people who are not allowed to mingle their blood shed their blood for one another except by coercion or for mercenary purposes? And can we ever hope that these moral barriers against our race amalgamation will not stand in the way of our political unity?

Then again we must give full recognition to this fact that our social estrictions are still tyrannical, so much so as to make men cowards. If a man tells me that he has heterodox ideas, but that he cannot follow them because he would be socially ostracised, I excuse him for having to live life of untruth, in order to live at all. The social habit of mind which helps us to make the life of our fellow-being a burden to them where they differ from us even in such a thing as their choice of food, is sure to ersist in our political organisation and result in creating engines of coercion to crush every rational difference which is the sign of life. And tyranny will only add to the inevitable lies and hypocrisy in our political life. Is the mere name of freedom so valuable that we should be willing o sacrifice for its sake our moral freedom'

The intemperance of our habits does not immediately show its effects when we are in the vigour of our youth. But it gradually consumes that vigour, and when the period of decline sets in then we have to settle accounts and pay off our debts, which leads us to insolvency. In the West you are still able to carry your head high, though your humanity is suffering every moment form its dipsomania of organising power. India also in the heyday of her youth could carry in her vital organs the dead weight of her social organisations stiffened to rigid perfection, but it has been fatal to her, and has produced a gradual paralysis of her living nature. And this is the reason why the educated community of India has become insensible of her social needs. They are taking the very immobility of our social structures as the sign of their perfection- and because the healthy feeling of pain is dead in the limbs of our social organism they delude themselves into thinking that it needs no ministration. Therefore they think that all their energies need their only scope in the political field. It is like a man whose legs have become shrivelled and useless, trying to delude himself that these limbs have grown still because they have attained their ultimate salvation, and all that is wrong about him is the shortness of his sticks.

So much for the social and the political regeneration of India. Now we come to her industries, and I am very often asked whether there is in India any industrial regeneration since the advent of the British government. It must be remembered that at the beginning of the British rule in India our industries were suppressed, and since then we have not met with any real help or encouragement to enable us to make a stand against the monster commercial organisations of the world. The nations have decreed that we must remain purely an agricultural people, even forgetting the use of arms for all time to come. Thus India is being turned into so many predigested morsels of food ready to be swallowed at any moment by any nation which has even the most rudimentary set of teeth in its head.

India therefore has very little outlet for her industrial originality. I personally do not believe in the unwieldy organisations of the present day. The very fact that they are ugly shows that they are in discordance with the whole creation. The vast powers of nature do not reveal their truth in hideousness, but in beauty. Beauty is the signature which the Creator stamps upon His works when He is satisfied with them. All our products that insolently ignore the laws of perfection and are unashamed in their display of ungainliness bear the perpetual weight of God's displeasure. So far as your commerce lacks the dignity of grace it is untrue. Beauty and her twin brother Truth require leisure and selfcontrol for their growth. But the greed of gain has no time or limit to its capaciousness. Its one object is to produce and consume. It has pity neither for beautiful nature nor for living human beings. It is ruthlessly ready without a moment's hesitation to crush beauty and life out of them, moulding them into money. It is this ugly vulgarity of commerce which brought upon it the censure of contempt in our earlier days, when men had leisure to have an unclouded vision of perfection in humanity. Men in those times were rightly ashamed of the instinct of mere moneymaking. But in this scientific age money, by its very abnormal bulk, has won its throne. And when from its eminence of piled-up things it insults the higher instincts of man, banishing beauty and noble sentiments from its surroundings, we submit. For we in our meanness have accepted bribes from its hands and our imagination has grovelled in the dust before its immensity of flesh.

But its very unwieldiness and its endless complexities are signs of failure. The swimmer who is an expert does not exhibit his muscular force by violent movements, but exhibits some power which is invisible and which shows itself in perfect grace and reposefulness. The true distinction of man

from animals is in his power and worth which are inner and invisible. But the present-day commercial civilisation of man is not only taking too much time and space but killing time and space. Its movements are violent; its noise is discordantly loud. It is carrying its own damnation because it is trampling into distortion the humanity upon which it stands. It is strenuously turning out money at the cost of happiness. Man is reducing himself to his minimum in order to be able to make amplest room for his organisations. He is deriding his human sentiments into shame because they are apt to stand in the way of his machines.

In our mythology we have the legend that the man who performs penances for attaining immortality has to meet with temptations sent by Indra, the Lord of the Immortals. If he is lured by them he is lost. The West has been striving for centuries after its goal of immortality. Indra has sent her the temptation to try her. It is the gorgeous temptation of wealth. She has accepted it, and her civilisation of humanity has lost its path in the wilderness of machinery.

This commercialism with its barbarity of ugly decorations is a terrible menace to all humanity, because it is setting up the ideal of power over that of perfection. It is making the cult of self-seeking exult in its naked shamelessness. Our nerves are more delicate than our muscles. Things that are the most precious in us are helpless as babes when we take I away from them the careful protection which they claim from us for their very preciousness. Therefore, when the callous rudeness or power runs amuck in the broadway of humanity it scares away by its grossness the ideals which we have cherished with the martyrdom of centuries.

The temptation which is fatal for the strong is still more so for the weak. And I do not welcome it in our Indian life, even though it be sent by the Lord of the Immortals. Let our life be simple in its outer aspect and rich in its inner gain. Let our civilisation take its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict. How to do it in the teeth of the drainage of our lifeblood by the economic dragons is the task set before the thinkers of all oriental nations who have faith in the human soul. It is a sign of laziness and impotency to accept conditions imposed upon us by others who have other ideals than ours. We should actively try to adapt the world powers to guide our history to its own perfect end.

From the above you will know that I am not an economist. I am willing to acknowledge that there is a law of demand and supply and an infatuation of man for more things than are good for him. And yet I will persist in believing that there is such a thing as the harmony of completeness in humanity, where poverty does not take away his riches. where defeat may lead him to victory, death to immortality, and where in the compensation of Eternal justice those who are the last may yet have their insult transmuted into a golden triumph.

17

Selected Poems

17

Selected Poems

Gitanjali

1

THOU HAST made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

❖❖❖

WHEN THOU commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call three friend who art my lord.

❖❖❖

I KNOW not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

❖❖❖

MY SONG has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

❖❖❖

LEAVE this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there were where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

❖❖❖

THE TIME that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said 'Here art thou!'

The question and the cry Oh, where?' melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance I am!'

❖❖❖

THE SONG that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.

I live in the hope or meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.

❖❖❖

CLOUDS heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?
In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd, but on this dark lonely day it is only for thee that I hope.
If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours.
I keep gazing on the far away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

❖❖❖

IF THOU speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and endure it. I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil and its head bent low with patience.
The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.
Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

❖❖❖

WHERE the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the. depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert and of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action-
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

II

THAT I want thee, only thee-let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.
As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry-I want thee, only thee.
As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is-I want thee, only thee.

❖❖❖

WHEN the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.
When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.
When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.
When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.
When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.

❖❖❖

EARLY in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage to no country and to no end.
In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.
Is the time not come yet? Are there works still to do? Lo, the evening has come down upon the shore and in the fading light the seabirds come flying to their nests. .
Who knows when the chains will be *off, and* the boat, like the last glimmer *of* sunset, vanish into the night?

❖❖❖

THE day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life.
And to-day when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find they have lain scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.
Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star.

❖❖❖

THIS is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.
Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.
From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see. in the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone.
In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.

III

I KNOW NOT from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy sun and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye:
In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy messenger has come within my heart and called me in secret.
I know not why to-day my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart.
It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.

❖❖❖

I HAD GONE a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say 'What hast thou to give to me?'

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

❖❖❖

THE NIGHT darkened. Our day's works had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrived for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said, The king was to come. We laughed and said 'No, it cannot be!

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep. Only some said, 'It is the messenger!'We laughed and said 'No, it must be the wind!'

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said, it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy murmur, 'No, it must be the rumbling of clouds!'

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came 'Wake up! delay not!' We pressed our hands on our hearts and shuddered with fear. Some said, 'Lo, there is the king's flag!' We stood up on our feet and cried 'There is no time for delay!'

The king has come-but where are lights, where are wreaths[7] Where is the throne to seat him? Oh, shame, Oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations? Some one has said, 'Vain is this cry! Greet him with empty hands, lead him into thy rooms all bares'

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the king of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night.

❖❖❖

I ASKED nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave I stood silent. I was alone by the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me and shouted, 'Come with us, the morning is wearing on to noon.' But I languidly lingered awhile lost in the midst of vague musings.

I heard not thy steps as thou camest. Thine eyes were sad when they fell on me; thy voice was tired as thou spokest low-'Ah, I am a thirsty traveller.' I started up from my day-dreams and poured water from my jar on thy joined palms. The leaves rustled overhead; the cuckoo sang from the unseen dark, and perfume of *babla* flowers came from the bend of the road.

I stood speechless with shame when my name thou didst ask. Indeed, what had I done for thee to keep me in remembrance? But the memory that I could give water to thee to allay thy thirst will cling to my heart and enfold it in sweetness. The morning hour is late, the bird sings in weary notes, *neem* leaves rustle overhead and I sit and think and think.

❖❖❖

LET ALL THE strains of joy mingle in my last song-the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter. the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

❖❖❖

ON THE seashore of endless worlds children meet. The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea play with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships get wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

❖❖❖

WHEN I BRING to you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints-when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth-when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower and why fruits are

secretly filled with sweet juice- when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what the pleasure is that streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight that is which the summer breeze brings to my bodywhen I kiss you to make you smile.

❖❖❖

THOU HAST made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes, not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; I forget that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me. it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.

❖❖❖

ON THE SLOPE of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, 'Maiden, where do you go shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all dark and lonesome-lend me your light!' She raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. 'I have come to the river,' she said, 'to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west.' I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

In the silence of gathering night I asked her, 'Maiden, your lights are all lit-then where do you go with your lamps? My house is all dark and lonesome,- lend me your light.' She raised her dark eyes on my face and stood for a moment doubtful. 'I have come,' she said at last, 'to dedicate my lamp to the sky.' I stood and watched her light uselessly burning in the void.

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, 'Maiden, what is your quest holding the lamp near your hear? My house is all dark and lonesome,- lend me your light.' She stopped for a minute and thought and gazed at my face in the dark. 'I have brought my light,' she said, 'to join the carnival of lamps.' I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights.

❖❖❖

THOU ART THE sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

IV

THE SAME stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow:

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

❖❖❖

ON MANY AN idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord: Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers.

❖❖❖

DEITY OF THE ruined temple! The broken strings of *Vina* sing no more your praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. The air is still and silent about you.

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers-the flowers that for your worship are offered no more.

Your worshipper of old wanders ever longing for favour still refused. In the eventide, when fires and shadows mingle with the gloom of dust, he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart.

Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple. Many a night of worship goes away with lamp unlit.

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy stream of oblivion when their time is come.

Only the deity of the ruined temple remains unworshipped in deathless neglect.

❖❖❖

I KNOW that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eye.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is

its meanest lives.
Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got- let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

❖❖❖

I HAVE got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure.
Here I give back the keys of my door-and I give up all claims to my house, I only ask for last kind words from you.
We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now they day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

V

I WAS not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.
What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight!
When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.
Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.
The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

❖❖❖

WHEN I GO from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.
I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed-let this be my parting word.
In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play. and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.
My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come let this be my parting word.

❖❖❖

I DIVE down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.
No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.
And now I am eager to die into the deathless.
Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.
I shall tune it to the notes of for ever, and, when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

❖❖❖

IN ONE salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.
Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.
Let all my songs, gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.
Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

❖❖❖

Crossing

I

THE run breaks out from the clouds on the day wren I must go.
And the sky gazes upon the earth like God's wonder.
My heart is sad, for it knows nest from where comes its call.
Does the breeze bring the whisper of the world which I leave behind with its music of tears melting in the sunny silence? or the breath of the island in the faraway sea backing in the Summer of the unknown flowers?

❖❖❖

DELIVER me from my own shadows, my lord, from the wrecks anti confusion of my days.
For the night is dark and thy pilgrim is blinded, Hold thou my hand. Deliver me from despair.
Touch with thy flame the lightless lamp of my sorrow.
Waken my tired strength from its sleep.
Do not let me linger behind counting my losses.
Let the road sing to me of the house a every step.
For the night is dark, and thy pilgrim is blinded.
Hold thou my hand.

❖❖❖

THOU hast given me thy love, filling the world with thy gifts.
They are showered upon me when I do not know them, for my heart is asleep and dark is the night.
Yet though lost in the cavern of my dreams I have been thrilled with fitful gladness;
And I know that in return for the treasure of thy great worlds thou wilt receive from me one little flower of love in the morning when my heart awakes.

❖❖❖

YOU came to my door in the dawn and sang; it angered me to be awakened from sleep, and you went away unheeded.
You came in the noon and asked for water; it vexed me in my work, and you were sent away with reproaches.
You came in the evening with your flaming torches.
You seemed to me like a terror and 1 shut my door.
Now in the midnight I sit alone in my lampless room and call you back whom I turned away in insult.

❖❖❖

I KNOW that this life, missing its ripeness in love, is not altogether lost.
I know that the flowers that fade in the dawn, the streams that strayed in the desert, are not altogether lost.
I know that whatever lags behind in this -life laden with slowness is not altogether lost.
I know that my dreams that are still unfulfilled, and my melodies still unstruck, are clinging to some lutestrings of thine, and they and they are not altogether lost.

II

THE day is dim with rain.
Angry lightnings glance through the tattered cloud-veils.
And the forest is like a caged lion shaking its mane in despair.
On such a day amidst the winds beating their wings, let me find my peace in thy presence,
For the sorrowing sky has shadowed my solitude, to deepen the meaning of thy touch about my heart,

❖❖❖

ON THAT night when the storm broke open my door.
I did not know that you entered my room through the ruins,
For the lamp was blown out, and it became dark;
I stretched my arms to the sky in search of help.
I lay on the dust waiting in the tumultuous dark and I knew not that storm was your own banner.
When the morning came I saw you standing upon the emptiness that was spread over my house.

❖❖❖

I CAME NEAREST to you, though I did not know it,-when I came to hurt you.
I owned you at last as my master when I fought against you to be defeated.
I merely made my debt to you burdensome when I robbed you in secret.
I struggled in my pride against your current only to feel all your force in my breast.
Rebelliously I put out the light in my house and your sky surprised me with its stars.

III

I HID MYSELF to evade you.
Now that I am caught at last, strike me, see if I flinch.
Finish the game for good.
If you win in the end, ship me of all that I have.
I have had my laughter and songs in wayside booths and stately halls,-now that you have come into my life, make me weep, see if you can break my heart.

❖❖❖

COME TO ME like summer cloud, spreading thy showers from sly to sky.
Deepen the purple of the hills with thy majestic shadows, quicken the languid forests into flowers, and awaken in the hill-streams the fervour of the far-away quest.
Come to me like summer cloud, stirring my heart with the promise of hidden life, and the gladness of the green.

IV

NO GUEST had come to my house for long, my doors were locked, my windows barred; I thought my night would lie lonely.
When I opened my eyes I found the darkness had vanished.
I rose up and ran and saw the bolts of my gates all broken, and through the open door your wind and light waved their banner.
When I was a prisoner in my own house, and the doors were shut, my heart ever planned to escape and to wander.
Now at my broken gate, I sit still arid wait for your coming,
You keep me bound by my freedom.

❖❖❖

LET THY love play upon my voice and rest on my silence.
Let it pass through my heart into all my movements.
Let thy love like stars shire in the darkness of my sleep and dawn in my awakening.
Let it burn in the flame of my desires
And flow in all currents of my own love.
Let me carry thy love in my life as a harp does its music, and give it back to thee at last with my life.

❖❖❖

THOU HAST given me thy seat at thy window from the early hour.
I have spoken to thy silent servants of the road running on thy errands, and nave sung with thy choir of the sky.
I have seen the sea in calm bearing its immeasurable silence; and in storm struggling to break open its own mystery of depth.
I have watched the earth in its prodigal feast of youth, and in its slow hours of brooding shadows.
Those who went to sow seeds have heard my greetings, arid those who brought their harvest home or their empty baskets have passed by my songs.
Thus at last my day has ended and now irk the evening I sing my last song to say that I have loved thy I world.

❖❖❖

I FELT I saw your' face, and I launched my boat in the dark.
Now the morning breaks in smiles and the spring flowers are in bloom.
Yet should the light fail and the flowers fade I will sail onward.
When you made mute signal to the world slumbered and the darkness was bare.
Now the bells ring loud and the boat is laden with gold.

V

MY EYES have lost their sleep in watching; yet if I do not meet thee still it is sweet to watch.
My heart sits in the shadow of the rains waiting for thy love; if she is deprived still it is sweet to hope.
They walk away in their different paths leaving me behind;

if I am alone still it is sweet to listen for thy footsteps.
The wistful face of the earth weaving its autumn mists wakens longing in my heart; if it is in vain still it is sweet to feel the pain of longing.

❖❖❖

HOLD THY faith firm, my heart, the day will dawn.
The seed of promise is deep in the soil, it will sprout,
Sleep, like a bud, will open its heart to the light, and the silence will find its voice.
The day is near when thy burden will become thy gift, and thy sufferings will light up thy path.

The Crescent Moon

I

BABY'S WAY

IF BABY only wanted to, he could fly up to heaven this moment.
It is not for nothing that he does not leave us.
He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her.
Baby knows all manner of wise words, though few or. earth can understand their meaning.
It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.
The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.
Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.
It is not for nothing he carne in such a disguise.
This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.
Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.
It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.
He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.
Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.
It is not for nothing he. has chosen to shed tears.
Though with the smile of his .tear face he draws mother's yearning heart to hint, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and loge.

THE UNHEEDED PAGEANT

AH, WHO was it coloured that little frock, my child, and covered your sweet limbs with that little red tunic?
You have come out in the morning to play in the courtyard, tottering and tumbling as you run.
But who was it coloured that little frock, my child?
What is it makes volt laugh, my little life-bud?
Mother smiles at you standing on the threshold.
She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd.
But what is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?
O beggar, what do you beg for, clinging to your mother's neck with both your hands?
O greedy heart, shall I pluck the world like a fruit from the sky to place it on your little rosy palm?
O beggar, what are you begging for?
The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.
The sun smiles and watches your toilet.
The sky watches over you when you sleep in your mother's arms, and the morning comes tiptoe to your bed and kisses your eyes.
The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.
The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky.
The world-mother keeps her seat by you in your mother's heart.
He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window with his flute.
And the fairy mistress of dreams is. coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky.

SLEEP-STEALER

WHO STOLE sleep from baby's eyes? I must know.
Clasping her pitcher to her waist mother went to fetch water from the village near by.
It was noon. The children's playtime was over; the ducks in the pond were silent.
The shepherd boy lay asleep under the shadow of the banyan tree.
The crane stood grave and still in the swamp near the mango grove.
In the meanwhile the sleep-stealer came and, snatching sleep from baby's eyes, flew away.
When mother came back she found baby travelling the room over on all fours.
Who stole sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and chain her up.
I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders and scowling stones, trickles a tiny stream.
I must search in the drowsy shade of the *bakula* grove, where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies' anklets tinkle in the stillness of starry nights.
In the evening I will peep into the whispering .silence of the bamboo forest, where fireflies squander their light, and will ask every creature I meet, 'Can anybody tell me where the Sleep-stealer lives?'
Who stole sleep from baby's eyes? I must know. Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could only catch her!
I would raid her nest and see where she hoards all her stolen sleep.
I would plunder it all, and carry it home.
I would bind her two wings securely, set her on the bank of the river, and then let her play at fishing with a reed among the rushes and waterlilies.
When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will mockingly din he, ears with:
Whose sleep will you steal now?'

THE BEGINNING

WHERE have I come from, where did you pick me up?'the baby asked its mother.
She answered Half crying, half laughing and clasping the

baby to her breast,-
'You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.
You were in the dolls of my childhood's games; and when with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made and unmade you then.
You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.
In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my mother you have lived.

In the lap of the deathless Spirit, who rules our home you have been nursed for ages.
When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it.
Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs, like a glow in the sky before the sunrise.
Heaven's first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.
As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.
For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mire?

WHEN AND WHY

WHEN I bring you[2] coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints-when I give coloured toys to you, my child.
When I sing to snake you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth-when I sing to make you dance.
When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice-when I bring .sweet things to your greedy hands.
When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams[3] from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings' to my body-when I kiss you to make you smile.

THE JUDGE

SAY of him what you please, but I know my child's failings.
I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child.
How should you know how dear he can be when you try to weigh his merits against his faults?
When I must punish him he becomes all the more a part of my being.
When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.
I alone have a right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves.

THE ASTRONOMER

I ONLY said, 'When in the evening the round full moon gets entangled among the branches of that *Kadam* tree, couldn't somebody catch it?'
But dada laughed at the and said, 'Baby, you are the silliest child I nave ever known. The moon is ever so far from us, how could anybody catch it?'
I said, 'Dada, how foolish you are! When mother looks out of her window and smiles down at us playing, would you call her far away?'
Still dada said, 'You are a stupid child! But, baby, where could you find a net big enough to catch the moon with?'
I said, 'Surely you could catch it wits; your hands.'
But dada laughed and said, 'You are the silliest child I have known. If it came nearer, you would see how big the moon is.'
I said, 'Dada, what nonsense they teach at your School! When mother bends her face down to kiss us does her face look very big?'
But still dada says, 'You are a stupid child.'

CLOUDS AND WAVES

MOTHER, the folk who live up in the clouds call out to me-
'We play from the time we wake till the day ends.
We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon.'
I ask, 'But, how am I to getup to you?'
'They answer, 'Come to the edge of the earth; lift up your hands to the sky, and you will be taken up into the Clouds.'
'My mother is waiting for me, at home,' I say. 'How can I leave her and come?'
Then they smile and float away. But I know a nicer game than that, mother. I shall be the cloud and you the moon.
I shall cover you with both my hands, and our house-top will be the blue sky.
The folk who live in the Waves call out to me-
'We sing from morning till night; on and or, we travel and know not where we pass.'
I ask, 'But, how am I to join you?'
They tell me, 'Come to the edge of the shore and stand with your eyes tight shut, and you will be carried out upon the waves.'
I say, 'My mother always wants me at home in the evening-how can I leave her and go?'
Then they smile, dance and pass by.
But I know a better game than that.
I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.
I shall roll on and on and on, and break upon your lap with laughter.
And no one in the world will know where we both are.

THE CHAMPA FLOWER

SUPPOSING I became a *champa* flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother?
You would call, 'Baby, where are you?' and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.
I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.
When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the *champa* tree to the

little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.
When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading *Ramayana,* and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and your lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.
But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?
When in the evening you went to the cowshed with the lighted lamp in your hand, I should suddenly drop on to the earth; again and he your own baby once more, and beg you to tell me a story.
'Where have you been, you naughty child?'
'I won't tell you, mother,' That's you and I would say then.

FAIRYLAND

IF PEOPLE came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air:
The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining gold.
The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards, and she wears a jewel that cost call the wealth of seven kingdoms.
But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my king's palace is,
It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.
The princess lies sleeping on the far-away shore of the sever. impassable seas.
There is tone in the world who can find her but myself.
She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.
She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand, and jewels will fall front her lips when she smiles.
But let me whisper in your ear, mother; she is there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.
When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.
I sit in the corner where the shadows of the walls meet together.
Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she knows where the barber in the story lives.
But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.
It is at the comer of the terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands.

II

THE LAND OF THE EXILE

MOTHER, The light has grown grey in the sky; I do not know what the time is.
There is no fun in my play, so I have come to you. It is Saturday, our holiday.
Leave off your work, mother; sit here by the window and tell tile where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is?
The shadow of the rains has covered the day from end to end.
'The fierce lightning is scratching the sky with its nails.
When the clouds rumble and it thunders, I love to be afraid in my heart and cling to you.
When the heavy rain patters for hours on the bamboo leaves, and our windows shake and rattle at the gusts of wind, I like to sit alone in the room, mother, with you, and hear you talk about the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale.
Where is it, mother, on the shore of what sea, at the foot of what hills, in the kingdom of what king?
There are no hedges there to mark the fields, no footpath across it by which the villagers reach their village in the evening, or the woman who gathers dry sticks in the forest can bring her load to the market. With patches of yellow grass in the sand and only one tree where the pair of wise old birds have their nest, lies the desert of Tepantar.
I can imagine how, on just such a cloudy day, the young son of the king is riding alone on a grey horse through the desert, in search of the princess who lies imprisoned in the giant's palace across that unknown water.
When the haze of the rain comes down in the distant sky, and lightning starts up like a sudden fit of pain, does he remember his unhappy mother, abandoned by the king, sweeping the cow-stall and wiping her eyes, while he rides through the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale?
See, mother, it is almost dark before the day is over, and there are no travellers yonder on the village road.
The shepherd boy has gone home early from the pasture, and men have left their fields to sit on mats under the eaves of their huts, watching the scowling clouds.
Mother, I have left all my books on the shelf-do not ask me to do my lessons now.
When I grow up and am big like my father, I shall learn all that must be learnt.
But just for to-day, tell me, mother, where the desert of Tepantar in the fairy tale is?

PAPER BOATS

DAY by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.
In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.
I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.
I load my little boats with *shiuli* flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.
I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.
I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats?
When night comes I busy my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.
The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading is their baskets full of dreams.

THE SAILOR

THE BOAT OF THE boatman Madhu is moored at the wharf of Rajgunj.
It is uselessly laden with jute, and has. been lying there idle for ever so long.
If he would only lend me his boat, I should man her with a hundred oars, and hoist sails, five or six or seven.

I should never steer her to stupid markets.
I should sail the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.
But, mother, you won't weep for me in a corner.
I am not going into the forest like Ramachandra to come back only after fourteen years.
I shall become the prince of the story, and fill my boat with whatever I like.
I shall take my friend Ashu with me. We shall sail merrily across the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.
We shall set sail in the early morning light.
When at noontide you are bathing at the pond, we shall be in the land of a strange king.
We shall pass the ford of Tirpurni, and leave behind us the desert of Tepantar.
When we come back it will be getting dark, and I shall tell you of all that we have seen.
I shall cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland.

THE FURTHER BANK

I LONG to go over there to the further bank of the river,
Where those boats are tied to the bamboo poles is a line;
Where men cross over in their boats in the morning with ploughs on their shoulders to till their faraway fields;
Where the cowherds make their lowing cattle swim across to the riverside pasture;
Whence they all come back home in the evening, leaving the jackals to howl in the island overgrown with weeds.
Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferry when I am grown up.
They say there are strange pools hidden behind that high bank,
Where flocks of wild ducks come when the rains are ever, and thick reeds grow round the margins where waterbirds lay their eggs;
Where snipes with their dancing tails stamp their tiny footprints upon the clean soft mud; .
Where in the evening the tall grasses crested with white flowers invite the moonbeam to float upon their waves.
Mother, if you don't mind, I should like to become the boatman of the ferryboat when I am grown up.
I shall cross and cross back front bank to bank, and all the boys and girls of the village will wonder at me while they are bathing.
When the sun climbs the mid sky and morning wears on to noon, I shall come running to you, saying,
'Mother, I air hungry!' When the day is dole an the shadows cower under the trees, I Shall come back in the dusk.
I shall never go away from you into the town to work like father.
Mother, if you don't mind. I should like to become he boatman of the ferryboat whey, I am grown up.

SYMPATHY

IF I WERE ONLY a little puppy, not your baby, mother dear, would you say 'No' to me if I tried to eat from your dish?
Would you drive me off, saying to me, 'Get away, you naughty little puppy?'
Then go, mother, go! I will never come to you when you call me, and never let you feed me any more.
If I were only a little green parrot, and not your baby, mother dear, would you keep me chained lest I should fly away?
Would you shake your finger at me and say, 'What an ungrateful wretch of a birds! It is gnawing at its chain day and night?'
Then, go, mother, go! I will run away into the woods; I will never let you take me in your arms again.

III

VOCATION

WHEN THE GONG sounds ten in the morning and I walk to school by our lane,
Every day I meet the hawker crying, 'Bangles, crystal bangles!'
There is nothing to hurry him on, there is no road he must take, no place he must go to, no time when he must come home.
I wish I were a hawker, spending my day in the road, crying, 'Bangles, crystal bangles!'
When at four in the afternoon I come back from the school,
I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground.
He does what he likes with his spade, he soils his clothes with dust, nobody takes him to task if he gets baked in the sun or gets wet.
I wish I were a gardener digging away at the garden with nobody to stop me from digging.
Just as it gets dark in the evening and my mother sends me to bed,
I can see through my open window the watchman walking up and down.
The lane is dark and lonely, and the street-lamp stands like a giant with one red eye in its head.
The watchman swings his lantern and walks with his shadow at his side, and never once goes to bed in his life.
I with I were a watchman walking the streets all night, chasing the shadows with my lantern.

SUPERIOR

MOTHER, YOUR baby is silly! She is so absurdly childish!
She does not know the difference between the lights in the streets and the stars.
When we play at eating with pebbles, she thinks they are real food, and tries to put them into her mouth.
When I open a book before her and ask her to learn her a. b, c, she tears the leaves with her hands and roars for joy at nothing; this is your Baby's way of doing her lesson.
When I shake my head at her in anger and scold her and call her naughty, she laughs and thinks it great fun.
Everybody knows that father is away, but, if in play I call aloud 'Father,' she looks about her in excitement and thinks that rather is near.
When I hold my class with the donkeys that our washerman brings to carry away the clothes and I warm her that I am the schoolmaster, she will scream for no reason and call me dada.

Your baby wants to catch the moon. She is so funny; she calls Ganesh Ganush.
Mother, your baby is silly, she is so absurdly childish!

IV

THE LITTLE BIG MAN

I AM SMALL because I am a little child. I shall be big when I am as old as my father is.
My teacher will come and say, 'It is late, bring your slate and your books.'
I shall tell him, 'ho you not know I am as big as father? And I must not have lessons any more.'
My master will wonder and say, 'He can leave his book. if he likes, for he is grown up.'
I shall dress myself and walk to the fair where the crowd is thick.
My uncle will come rushing up to me and say, 'You will get lost, my boy; let me carry you.'
I shall answer, 'Can't you see, uncle, I am as big as father. I must go to the fair alone.'
Uncle will say, 'Yes, he can go wherever he likes, for he is grown up.'
Mother will come from her bath when I am giving money to my nurse, for I shall know how to open the box with my key.
Mother will say, 'What are you about, naughty child?'
I shall tell her, 'Mother, don't you know, I am as big as father, and I must give silver to my nurse.'
Mother will say to herself; 'He can; give money to whom; he likes, for he is grown up.'
In the holiday time in October father will come home and, thinking that
I am still a baby, will' bring for me from the town little shoes and small silken frocks.
I shall say, 'Father give them to my dada, for I am as big as yon are.' Father will think and say, 'He can buy his own clothes if he likes, for he is grown up.'

AUTHORSHIP

YOU SAY that father writes a lot of books, but what he writes I don't understand.
He was reading to you all the evening, but could you really make out what he meant?
What nice stories, mother, you can tell us! Why can't father write like that, I wonder?
Did he never hear from his own mother stories of giants and fairies and princesses?
Has he forgotten them all?
Often when he gets late for his bath you leave to go and call him an hundred times.
You wait and keep his dishes warm for him, but he goes on writing and forgets.
Father always plays at making books.
If ever I go to play in father's room, you come and call me, 'what a naughty child!'
If I make the slightest noise, you say, 'Don't you see that father's at his work'
What's the fun of always writing and writing?
When I take up father's pen or pencil and write upon his book just as he does,-a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i,- why do you get cross with me, then, mother?
You never say a word when father writes.
When my father wastes such heaps of paper, mother, you don't seem to mind at all.
But if I take only one sheet to make a boat with, you say, 'Child, how troublesome you are!'
What do you think of father's spoiling sheets and sheets of paper with black marks all over on both sides?

V

THE WICKED POSTMAN

WHY do you sit there on the floor so quiet and silent, tell me mother dear
The rain is coming in through the open window, making you all wet, and you don't mind it.
Do you hear the going striking four? It is time for my brother to come home from school.
What has happened to you that look so strange?
Haven't you got a letter from father to-day?
I saw the postman bringing letters in his bag for almost everybody in the town.
Only, father's letters he keeps to read himself. I am sure the postman is a wicked man.
But don't be unhappy about that, mother dear.
Tomorrow is market day in the next .village. You ask your maid to buy some pens and papers.
I myself will write all father's letters; you will not find a single mistake.
I shall write from A right up to K.
But, mother, why do you smile? You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does!
But I shall rule my paper carefully, and write all the letters beautifully big.
When I finish my wilting, do you think I shall be so foolish as father and drop it into the horrid postman's bag?
I shall bring it to you myself without waiting, and letter by letter help you to my writing.
I know the postman does not like to give you the really nice letters.

THE HERO

MOTHER, LET us imagine we are travelling, and passing through a strange and dangerous country.
You are riding in a palanquin and I am trotting by you on a red horse.
It is evening and the sun goes down. The waste of *Joradighi* lies wan and grey before us. The land is desolate and barren.
You are frightened and thinking-'I know not where we have come to.'
I say to you, 'Mother, do not be afraid.'
The meadow is prickly with spiky grass, and through it runs a narrow broken path.
There are no cattle to be seen in the wide field; they have gone to their village stalls.

It grows dark and dim on the land and sky, and we cannot tell where we are going.
Suddenly you call me and ask me in a whisper, 'What light is that near the bank?'
Just then there bursts out a fearful yell, and figures come running towards us.
You sit crouched in your palanquin and repeat the names of the gods in prayer.
The bearers, shaking in terror, hide themselves in the thorny bush.
I shout to you, 'Don't be afraid, mother, I am here.'
With long sticks in their hands and hair all wild about their heads, they come nearer and nearer.
I shout, 'Have a care! you villains! One step more and you are dead men.'
They give another terrible yell and rush forward.
You clutch my hand and say, Dear boy, for heaven's sake, keep away from them.'
I say, 'Mother, just you watch me.'
Then I spur my horse for a wild gallop, and my sword and buckler clash against each other.
The fight becomes so fearful, mother, that it would give you a cold shudder could you see it from your palanquin.
Many of them fly, and a great number are cut to pieces.
I know you are thinking, sitting all by yourself, that your boy must be dead by this time.
But I come to you all stained with blood, and say, 'Mother, the fight is over now.'
You come out and kiss me, pressing me to your heart, and you say to yourself.
'I don't know what I should do if I hadn't my boy to escort me.'
A thousand useless things happen day after day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance?
It would be like a story in a book.
My brother would say, 'Is it possible? I always thought he was so delicate!'
Our village people would all say in amazement, 'Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother?'

THE LAST BARGAIN

'COME and hire me ,' I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.
Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.
He held my hand and said, 'I will hire you with my power.'
But his power counted for nought, and he went away in his chariot.
In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.
I wandered along the crooked lane.
An old man came out with his bag of gold.
He pondered and said, 'I will hire you with my money.'
He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.
It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.
The fair maid came out and said, 'I will hire you with a smile.'
Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.
The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly.
A child sat playing with shells.
He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, 'I hire you with nothing.'
From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's play made me a free man.

❖❖❖

Fireflies

I

MY fancies are fireflies-
Specks of living light
twinkling in the dark.

❖❖❖

MY words that are slight
my lightly dance upon time's waves
when my works heavy with import have gone down.

❖❖❖

LEAVE out my name from the gift
if it be a burden,
but keep my song.

❖❖❖

SORROW that has lost its memory
is like the dumb dark hours
that have not bird songs
but only the cricket's chirp

❖❖❖

THE tyrant claims freedom to kill freedom and yet to keep it for himself.

❖❖❖

WHILE god waits for His temple to be built of love men bring stones.

II

I TOUCH GOD in my song as the hill touches the far-away sea with its waterfall.

❖❖❖

I HAVE thanked the trees that have made my life fruitful but have failed to remember the grass that has ever kept it green.

❖❖❖

THE WORLD suffers most from the disinterested tyranny of its wellwisher.

❖❖❖

THESE PAPER boats of mine are meant to dance on the ripples of hours, and not to reach any destination.

III

IN THE THRILL of little leaves
I see the air's invisible dance,
and in their glimmering

the secret heart-beats of the sky.

❖❖❖

THE WORLD speaks to me in pictures,
my soul answers in music.

❖❖❖

LOVE IS AN endless mystery,
for it had nothing else to explain it.

❖❖❖

I AM ABLE to love my God
because He gives me freedom to deny Him.

❖❖❖

WEALTH IS THE burden of bigness,
Welfare the fulness of being.

IV

YOUR SMILE, my love, like the smell of a strange flower,
is simple and inexplicable.

❖❖❖

LET ME NOT grope in vain in the dark
but keep my mind still in the faith
that the day will break
and truth will appear
in its simplicity.

❖❖❖

LIKE MY heart's pain that has long missed its meaning,
the sun's rays robed in dark
hide themselves under the ground.
Like my heart's pain at love's sudden touch,
they change their veil at the spring's
call and come out in the carnival of colours,
in flowers and leaves.

❖❖❖

IN MY LIFE'S garden my wealth has been of the shadows
and lights that are never gathered and stored.

V

I MISS the meaning of my own part in the play of life because
I know not of the parts that others play.

❖❖❖

THE UNSEEN dark plays on his flute and the rhythm of light
eddies into stars and suns, into thoughts and dreams.

❖❖❖

WHEN the voice of the Silent touches my words I know him
and therefore I know myself.

❖❖❖

WHEN death comes and whispers to me
'Thy days are ended,'
let me say to him, 'I have lived in love
and not in mere time.'
He will ask 'Will thy songs remains?'
I shall say 'I know not, but this I know
that often when I sang if found my eternity.'

Fruit Gathering

I

I WOKE and found his letter with the morning.
I do not know what it says, for I cannot read.
I shall leave the wise man alone with his books, I shall not trouble him, for who knows if he can read what the letter says.
Let me hold it to my forehead and press it to my heart.
When the night grows still and stars come out one by one I will spread it on my lap and stay silent.
The rustling leaves will read it aloud to me, the rushing stream will chant it, and the seven wise stars will sing it to me from the sky.
I cannot find what I seek, I cannot understand what I would learn, but this unread letter has lightened my burdens and turned my thoughts into songs.

❖❖❖

BE READY to launch forth, my heart! and let those linger who must.
For your name has been called in the morning sky.
Wait for none!
The desire of the bud is for the night and dew, but the blown flower cries for the freedom of light.
Burst your sheath, my heart, and come forth!

❖❖❖

You Took my hand and drew me to your side, made me sit on the high seat before all men, till I became timid, unable to stir and walk my own way; doubting and debating at every step lest I should tread upon any thorn of their disfavour.
I am freed at last!
The blow has come, the drum of insult sounded, my seat is laid low in the dust.
My paths are open before me.
My wings are full of the desire of the sky.
I go to join the shooting stars of midnight, to plunge into the profound shadow.
I am like the storm-driven cloud of summer that, having cast off its crown of gold, hangs as a sword the thunderbolt upon a chain of lightning.
In desperate joy I run upon the dusty path of the despised; I draw near to your final welcome.
The child finds its mother when it leaves her womb.
When I am parted from you thrown out from your household, I am free to see your face.

❖❖❖

FAR below flowed the Jumna, swift and clear, above frowned the jutting bank.

Hills dark with the woods and scarred with the torrents were gathered around.
Govinda, the great Sikh teacher, sat on the rock reading scriptures, when Raghunath, his disciple, proud of his wealth, came and bowed to him and said, 'I have brought my poor present unworthy of your acceptance.'
Thus saying he displayed before the teacher a pair of .gold bangles wrought with costly stones.
The master took up one of them, twirling it round his finger, and the diamonds darted shafts of light.
Suddenly it slipped from his hand and rolled down the bank into the water.
'Alas,' screamed Raghunath and jumped into the stream.
The teacher set his eyes upon his book, and the water held and hid what it stole and went its way.
The daylight faded when Raghunath came back to the teacher tired and dripping.
He panted and said, 'I can still get it back if you show me where it fell.'
The teacher took up the remaining bangle and throwing it into the water said, 'It is there.'

❖❖❖

YOUR speech is simple, my Master, but not theirs who talk of you.
I understand the voice of your stars and the silence of your trees.
I know that my heart would open like a flower; that my life has filled itself at a hidden fountain.
Your songs, like birds from the lonely land of snow, are winging to build their nests in my heart against the warmth of its April; and I am content to wait for the merry season.

❖❖❖

SUDAS, the gardener, plucked from his tank the last lotus left by the ravage of winter and went to sell it to the king at the palace gate.
There he met a traveller who said to him, 'Ask your price for the last lotus,-I shall, offer it to Lord Buddha.'
Sudas said, If you pay one golden *masha* it will be yours.'
The traveller paid it.
At that moment the king came out and he wished to buy the flower, for he was on his way to see Lord Buddha, and he thought, It would be a fine thing to lay at his feet the lotus that bloomed in winter.'
When the gardener said he had been offered a golden *masha* the king offered him ten, but the traveller doubled the price.
The gardener, being greedy imagine a greater gain from him for whose sake they were bidding. He bowed and said, 'I cannot sell this lotus.
In the hushed shade of the mango grove beyond the city wall Sudas stood before Lord Buddha, on whose lips sat the silence of live and whose eyes beamed peace like the morning star of the dew-washed autumn.
Sudas looked in his face and put the lotus at his feet and bowed his head to the dust.
Buddha smiled and asked, 'What is your wish, my son?'
Sudas, cried, 'The least touch of your feet.'

❖❖❖

THIS autumn morning is tired with excess of light, and if your songs grow fitful and languid give me your flute awhile.
I shall but play with it as the whim takes me,-now take it on my lap, now touch it with my lips, now keep it by my side on the grass,
But in the solemn evening stillness I shall gather flowers, to deck it with wreaths, I shall fill it with fragrance; I shall worship it with the lighted lamp.
Then at night I shall come to you and give you back your flute.
You will play on it the music of midnight when the lonely crescent moon wanders among the stars.

❖❖❖

SANATAN was telling his beads by the Ganges when a Brahmin in rags came to him and said, 'Help me, I am poor!'
'My alms-bowl is all that is my own,' said Sanatan, 'I have given away everything I had.'
'But my lord Shiva came to me in my dreams,' said the Brahmin, 'and counselled me to come to you.'
Sanatan suddenly remembered he had picked up a stone without price among the pebbles on the river-bank, and thinking that some one might need it hid it in the sands.
He pointed out the spot to the Brahmin, who wondering dug up the stone.
The Brahmin sat on the earth and mused alone till the sun went down behind the trees, and cowherds went home with their cattle.
Then he rose and came slowly to Sanatan and said, 'Master, give me the least fraction of the wealth that disdains all the wealth of the world.'
And he threw the precious stone into the water.

❖❖❖

TIME after time I came to your gate with raised hands, asking for more and yet more.
You gave and gave, now in slow measure, now in sudden excess.
I took some, and some things I let drop; some lay heavy on my hands; some I made into playthings and broke them when tired; till the wrecks and the hoard of your gifts grew immense, hiding you, and the ceaseless expectation wore my heart out.
Take, oh take-has now become my cry.
Shatter all from this beggar's bowl: put out this lamp of the importunate watcher: hold my hands, raise me from the still-gathering heap of your gifts into the bare infinity of your uncrowded presence.

❖❖❖

YOU have set. me among those who are defeated.
I know it is not for me to win, nor to leave the game.
I shall plunge into the pool although but to sink to the

bottom.
I shall play the game of my undoing. I shall stake all I have and when I lose my last penny I shall stake myself, and then I think I shall have won through my utter defeat.

❖❖❖

'WHO among you will take up the duty of feeding the hungry?' Lord Buddha asked his followers when famine raged at Shravasti.
Ratnakar, the banker, hung his head and said, Much more is needed than all my wealth to feed the hungry.'
Jaysen, the chief of the King's army, said, 'I would gladly give my life's blood, but there is not enough food in my house.'
Dharmapal, who owned broad acres of land, said with a sigh, 'The drought demon has sucked my fields dry. I know not how to pay King's dues.'
Then rose Supriya, the mendicant's daughter.
She bowed to all and meekly said, 'I will feed the hungry.' 'How?' they cried in surprise. 'How can you hope to fulfil that vow?'
'I am the poorest of you all,' said Supriya, 'that is my strength. I have my coffer and my store at each of your houses.'

II

THE TRUMPET lies in the dust.
The wind is weary, the light is dead.
An the evil day!
Come, fighters, carrying your flags, and singers, with your war-songs!
Come, pilgrims of the march, hurrying on your journey!
The trumpet lies in the dust waiting for us. I was on my way to the temple with my evening offerings, seeking for a place of rest after the day's dusty toil: hoping my hurts would be healed and the stains in my garment washed white, when I found thy trumpet lying in the dust.
Was it not the hour for me to light my evening lamp?
Had not the night sung its lullaby to the stars?
O thou blood-red rose, my poppies of sleep have paled and faded!
I was certain my wanderings were over and my debts all paid when suddenly I came upon thy trumpet lying in the dust.
Strike my drowsy heart with thy spell of youth!
Let my joy in life blaze up in fire.
Let the shafts of awakening fly through the heart of night, and a thrill of dread shake blindness and palsy.
I have come to raise thy trumpet from the dust.
Sleep is no more for me-my walk shall be through showers of arrows.
Some shall run out of their houses and come to my side—some shall weep.
Some in their beds shall toss and groan in dire dreams. For to-night thy trumpet shall be sounded.
From thee I have asked peace only to find shame.
Now I stand before thee-help me to put on my armour!
Let hard blows of trouble strike fire into my life.
Let my heart beat in pain, the drum of thy victory.
My hands shall be utterly emptied to take up thy trumpet

❖❖❖

O FIFE, MY brother, I sing victory to you.
You are the bright red image of fearful freedom.
You swing your arms in the sky, you sweep your impetuous fingers across the hasp-string, your dance music is beautiful.
When my days are ended and the gates are opened you will bum to ashes this cordage of hands and feet.
My body will be one with you, my heart will be caught in the whirls of your frenzy, and the burning heat that was my life will flash up and mingle itself in your flame.
I HAVE KISSED this world with my eyes and my limbs; I have wrapt it within my heart in numberless folds; I have flooded its days and nights with thoughts till the world and my life have grown one; and I love my life because I love the light of the sky so enwoven with me.
If to leave this world be as real as to love it-then there must be a meaning in the meeting and the parting of life.
If that love were deceived in death, then, the canker of this deceit would eat into all things, and the stars would shrivel and grow black.

❖❖❖

YOURS IS THE light that breaks forth from the dark, and the good that sprouts from the cleft hear! of strife.
Yours is the house that opens upon the world, and the love that calls to the battlefield.
Yours is the gift that still is a gain when everything :s a loss, and the life that flows through the caverns of death.
Yours is the heaven that lies in the common dust, and you are there for me, you are there for all.

❖❖❖

WHEN THE weariness of the road is upon me, and the thirst of the sultry day; when the ghostly hours of the dusk throw their shadows across
my life, then I cry not for your voice only, my friends, but for your touch.
There is an anguish in my heart for the burden of its riches not given to you.
Put out your hand through the night, let me hold it and fill it and keep it; let me feel its touch along. the lengthening stretch of my loneliness.

III

NOT FOR me is the love that knows no restraint, but like the foaming wine that having burst its vessel in a moment would run to waste.
Send me the love which is cool and pure like your rain that blesses the thirsty earth and fills the homely earthen jars.
Send me the love that would soak down into the centre of being, and from there would spread like the unseen sap through the branching tree of life, giving birth to fruits and flowers.
Send me the love that keeps the heart still with the fulness of peace.

❖❖❖

THE SUN HAD set on the western margin of the river among the tangle of the forest.

The hermit boys had brought the cattle home, and sat round the fire to listen to the master, Gautama, when a strange boy came, and greeted him with fruits and flowers, and bowing low at his feet, spoke in a bird-like voice-'Lord, I have come to thee to the taken into the path of the supreme Truth.

'My name is Satyakama.'

'Blessings be on thy head,' said the master.

'Of what clan art thou, my child? It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom.'

'Master,' answered the boy, 'I know not of what clan I am. I shall go and ask my mother.

Thus saying, Satyakama took leave, and wading across the shallow stream, came back to his mother's but, which stood at the end of the sandy waste at the edge of the sleeping village.

The lamp burnt dimly in the room, and the mother stood at the door in the dark waiting for her son's return.

She clasped him to her bosom, kissed him on his hair, and asked him of his errand to the master.

'What is the name of my father, dear mother?' asked the boy.

'It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom, said Lord Gautama to me.'

The woman lowered her eyes, and spoke in a whisper.

'In my youth I was poor and had many masters. Thou didst come to thy mother Jabala's arms, my darling, who had no husband.'

The early rays of the sun glistened on the tree-tops of the forest hermitage.

The students, with their tangled hair still wet with their morning bath, sat under the ancient tree, before the master.

There came Satyakama.

He bowed low at the feet of the sage, and stood silent.

Tell me,' the great teacher asked him, 'of what clan art thou?'

'My lord,' he answered,, 'I know it not. My mother said when I asked her, "I had served many masters in my youth, and thou hadst come to thy mother Jabala's arms, who had no husband."'

There rose a murmur like the angry hum of bees disturbed in their hive; and the students muttered at the shameless insolence of that outcast.

Master Gautama rose from his seat, stretched out his arms, took the boy to his bosom, and said, 'Best of all Brahmins art thou, my child. Thou hast the noblest heritage of truth.'

❖❖❖

YOU ALWAYS stand alone beyond the stream of my songs.

The waves of my tunes wash your feet but I know not how to reach them.

This play of mine with you is a play from afar.

It is the pain of separation that melts into melody through my flute.

I wait for the time when your boat crosses over to my shore and you take my flute into your own hands.

THE WORLD IS yours at once and for ever.

And because you have not want, my king, you have no pleasure in your wealth.

It is as though it were naught.

Therefore through slow time you give me what is yours, and ceaselessly win your kingdom in me.

Day after day you buy your sunrise from my heart, and you find your love carven into the image of my life.

IV

To THE birds you gave songs, the birds gave you songs in return.

You gave me only voice, yet asked for more, and I sing.

You made your winds light and they are fleet in their service.

You burdened my hands that I myself may lighten them, and at last, gain unburdened freedom for your service.

You created your Earth filling its shadows with fragments of light.

There you paused; you left me empty-handed in the dust to create your heaven.

To all things else you give; from me you ask.

The harvest of my life ripens in the sun and the shower till I reap more than you sowed, gladdening your heart, O Master of the golden granary.

❖❖❖

LET ME not pray to be sheltered frown dangers but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone; but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.

❖❖❖

I WILL utter your name, sitting alone among the shadows of my silent thoughts.

I will utter it without words, I will utter it without purpose.

For I am like a child that calls its mother an hundred times, glad that it can say 'Mother.'

❖❖❖

WHEN the world sleeps I come to your door.

The stars are silent, and I am afraid to sing.

I wait and watch, till your shadow passes by the balcony of night and I return with a full heart.

Then in the morning I sing by the roadside;

The flowers in the hedge give me answer and the morning air listens,

The travellers suddenly stop and look in my face, thinking, I have called them by their names.

❖❖❖

Lover's Gift

I

WHERE is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the learned muddle the summer breeze with their snuff; where dispute is unending if the oil depend upon the cask, or the cask upon the oil; where yellow manuscripts frown upon the fleet-footed frivolousness of life? My song cries out, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the man of fortune grows enormous in pride and flesh in his marble palace, with his books on the shelves, dressed in leather, painted in gold, dusted by slaves, their virgin pages dedicated to the god obscure? My song gasped and said, Ah, no, no, no.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the young student sits, with his head bent upon his books, and his mind straying in youth's dream-land; where prose is prowling on the desk, and poetry hiding in the heart? There among that dusty disorder would you care to play hide-and-seek? My song remains silent in shy hesitation.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the bride is busy in the house, where she runs to her bedroom the moment she is free, and snatches, from under her pillows, the book of romance so roughly handled by the baby, so full of the scent of her hair? My song heaves a sigh and trembles with uncertain desire.

Where is the market for you, my song? Is it there where the least of a bird's notes is never missed, where the stream's babbling finds its full wisdom where all the lute-strings of the world shower their music upon two fluttering hearts? My song bursts out and cries, Yes, yes.

❖❖❖

IF, BY chance you think of me, I shall sing to you when the rainy evening loosens her shadows upon the river, slowly trailing her dim light towards the west,- when the day's remnant is too narrow for work or for play.

You will sit alone in the balcony of the south, and I shall sing from the darkened room. In the growing dusk, the smell of the wet leaves will cone through the window; and the stormy winds will become clamorous in the coconut grove.

When the lighted lamp is brought into the room I shall go. And then, perhaps, you will listen to the night, and hear my song when I am silent.

❖❖❖

I THOUGHT I had something to say to her when our eyes met across the hedge. But she passed away. And it rocks day and night, like a boat, on every wave of the hours the word that I had to say to her. It seems to sail in the autumn clouds in an endless quest and to bloom into evening flowers seeking its lost moment in the sunset. It twinkles like fireflies in my heart to find its meaning in the dusk of despair the word that I had to say to her.

❖❖❖

WHEN our farewell moment came, like a low-hanging rain cloud, I had only time to tie a red ribbon on your wrist, while my hands trembled. Today I sit alone on the grass in the season of *mahua* flowers, with one quivering question in my mind, 'Do you still keep the little red ribbon tied on your wrist?'

You went by the narrow road that skirted the blossoming field of flax. I saw that my garland of overnight was still hanging loose from your hair. But why did you not wait till I could gather, in the morning, new flowers for my final gift? I wonder if unaware it dropped on your way,-the garland hanging loose from your hair.

Many a song I had sung to you, morning and evening, and the last one you carried in your voice when you went away. You never tarried to hear the one song unsung I had for you alone and for ever. I wonder if, at last, you are tired of my song that you hummed to yourself while walking through the field.

II

THERE IS A looker-on who sits behind my eyes. It seems he has seen things in ages and worlds beyond memory's shore, and those forgotten sights glisten on the grass, and shiver on the leaves. He has seen tinder new veils the face of the one beloved, in twilight hours of many a nameless star. Therefore his sky seems to ache with the pain of countless meetings and partings, and a longing pervades this spring breeze,-the longing that is full of the whisper of ages without beginning.

ARE YOU A Mere picture, and not as true as those stars, true as this dust? They throb with the pulse of things, but you are immensely aloof in your stillness, painted form.

The day was when you walked with me, your breath warm, your limbs singing of life. My world found its speech in your voice, and touched my heart with your face. You suddenly stopped in your walk, in the shadow-side of the Forever, and I went on alone.

Life, like a child, laughs, shaking its rattle of death as it runs; it beckons me on, I follow the unseen; but you stand there, where you stopped behind that dust and those stars; and you are a mere picture.

No, it cannot be. Had the lifeflood utterly stopped in you, it would stop the river in its flow, and the footfall of dawn in her cadence of colours. Had the glimmering dusk of your hair vanished in the hopeless dark, the woodland shade of summer would die with its dreams.

Can it be true that I forgot you? We haste on without heed, forgetting the flowers on the roadside hedge. Yet they breathe unaware into our forgetfulness, filling it with music. You have moved from my world, to take seat at the root of my life, and therefore is this forgetting-remembrance lost in its own depth.

You are no longer before my songs, but one with them. You came to me with the first ray of dawn. I lost you with the last gold of evening. Ever since I am always finding you through the dark. No, you are no mere picture.

❖❖❖

THE ROAD IS my wedded companion. She speaks to me under my feet all day, she sings to my dreams all night.

My meeting with her had no beginning, it begins endlessly at each daybreak, renewing its summer infresh flowers and songs, and her every new kiss is the first kiss to me.
The road and I are lovers. I change my dress for her night after night, leaving the tattered cumber of the old in the wayside inns when the day dawns.
THE EARLY autumn day is cloudless. The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of the tottering tree by the ford. The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the village, dips down into the stream.
My heart is full, as I look around me and see the. silent sky and the flowing water, and feet that happiness is spread abroad, as simply as a smile on a child's face.

❖❖❖

III

CHAMPA

(Translated from the Bengali of Satyendranath Dana)

I OPENED my bud when April breathed her last and the summer scorched with kisses the unwilling earth. I came half afraid and half curious, like a mischievous imp peeping at a hermit's cell.
I heard the frightened whispers of the despoiled woodland, and the *Kokil* gave voice to the languor of the summer; through the fluttering leaf curtain of my birth-chamber I saw the world grim, grey, and haggard.
Yet boldly I came out strong with the faith of youth, quaffed the fiery wine from the glowing bowl of the sky, and proudly saluted the morning, I, the champa flowers, who carry the perfume of the sun in my heart.

❖❖❖

THEY DO NOT build high towers in the Land of All-I-Have-Found. A grassy lawn runs by the road, with a stream of fugitive water at its side. The bees haunt the cottage porches abloom with passion flowers. "The men set out on their errands with a smile, and in the evening come home with a song, with no wages, in the Land of All-I-Have- Found.
In the midday, sitting in the cool of their courtyards, the women hum and spin at their wheels, while over the waving harvest comes wafted the music of shepherds' flutes. It rejoices the wayfarers' hearts who walk singing through the shimmering shadows of the fragrant forest in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.
The traders sail with their merchandise down the river, but they do not moor their boats in this land; soldiers march with banters flying, but the king never stops his chariot. Travellers who come from afar to rest here awhile, go away without knowing what there is in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.
Here crowd do not jostle each other in the roads. O poet, set up your house in this land. Wash from your feet the dust of distant wandering, tune your lute, and at the day's end stretch yourself on the cool grass under the evening star in the Land of All-I-Have-Found.

❖❖❖

The Fugitive

I

WE came hither together, friends, and now at the cross-roads I stop to bid you farewell.
Your path is wide and straight before you, but my call comes up by hays from the unknown.
I shall follow wind and cloud; I shall follow the stars to where day breaks behind the hills; I shall follow lovers who, as they walk, twine their days into a wreath on a single thread of song, 'I love'.

❖❖❖

IT WAS growing dark when I asked her, 'What strange land have I come to?'
She only lowered her eyes, and the water gurgled in the throat of her jar, she walked away.
The trees hang vaguely over the bank, and the land appears as though it already belonged to the past.
The water is dumb, the bamboos are darkly still, a wristlet tinkles against the. water-jar from down the lane.
Row no more, but fasten the boat to this tree,-for I love the look of this land.
The evening star goes down behind the temple dome, and the pallor of the marble landing haunts the dark water.
Belated wayfarers sigh; for light from hidden windows is splintered into the darkness by intervening wayside trees and bushes. Still that wristlet tinkles against the water-jar, and retreating steps rustle from down the lane littered with leaves.
The night deepens, the palace towers loom spectre-like, the town hums wearily.
Row no more; but fasten the boat to a tree.
Let me seek rest in this strange land, dimly lying under the stars, where darkness tingles with the tinkle of a wristlet knocking against a water-jar.

❖❖❖

O THAT I were stored with a secret, like unshed rain in summer clouds-a secret, folded up in silence, that I could wander away with.
O that I had some one to whisper to, where slow waters lap under trees that doze in the sun.
The hush this evening seems to expect a footfall, and you ask me for the cause of my tears.
I cannot give a reason why I weep, for that is a secret still withheld from me.

❖❖❖

FOR once be careless, timid traveller, and utterly lose your way; wideawake though you are, be like broad daylight enticed by and netted in mist.
Do not shun the garden of Lost Hearts waiting at the end of

the wrong road, where the grass is strewn with wrecked red flowers, and disconsolate water heaves in the troubled sea.

Long have you watched over the store gathered by weary years. Let it be stripped, with nothing remaining but the desolate triumph of losing all.

❖❖❖

TRANSLATIONS : VAISHNAVA SONGS

I

OH SAKHI,I my sorrow knows no bounds.

August comes laden with rain clouds and my house is desolate.

The stormy sky growls, the earth is flooded with rain, my love is far away, and my heart is torn with anguish.

The peacocks dance, for the clouds rumble and frogs croak.

The night brims with darkness flicked with lightning.

Vidyapati[2] asks, 'Maiden, how are you to spend your days and nights without your lord?'

❖❖❖

II

LUCKY was my awakening this morning, for I saw my beloved.

The sky was one piece of joy, and my life and youth were fulfilled.

To-day my house becomes my house in truth, and my body my body.

Fortune has proved a friend, and my doubts are dispelled.

Birds, sing your best; moon, shed your fairest light!

Let fly your darts, Love-God, in millions!

I wait for the moment when my body will grow golden at his touch.

Vidyapati says, 'Immense is your good fortune, and blessed is your love.'

III

I FEEL my body vanishing into the dust whereon my beloved walks.

I feel one with the water of the lake where he bathes.

Oh Sakhi, my love crosses death's boundary when I meet him.

My heart melts in the light and merges in the mirror whereby he views his face.

I move with the air to kiss him when he waves his fan, and wherever he wanders I enclose him like the sky.

Govindadas says, 'You are the gold-setting, fair maidens, he is the emerald.

❖❖❖

IV

My love, I will keep you hidden in my eyes; I will thread your image like a gem on my joy and hang it on my bosom.

You have been in my heart ever since I was a child, throughout my youth, throughout my life, even through all my dreams.

You dwell in my being when I sleep and when I wake.

Know that I am woman, and bear with me when you find me wanting.

For I have thought and thought and know for certain that all that is left for me in this world is your love, and if I lose you for a moment I die.

Chandidas says, 'Be tender to her who is yours in life and death.'

II

BEHIND the rusty iron gratings of the opposite window sits a girl, dark and plain of face, like a boat stranded on a sand-bank when the river is shallow in the summer.

I come back to my room after my day's work, and my tired eyes are lured to her.

She seems to me like a lake with its dark lonely waters edged by moonlight.

She has only her window for freedom: there the morning light meets her musings, and through it her dark eyes like lost stars travel back to their sky.

❖❖❖

I REMEMBER the day.

The heavy shower of rain is slackening into fitful pauses, renewed gusts of wind startle it from a first lull.

I take up my instrument. Idly I touch the strings, till, without my knowing, the music borrows the mad cadence of that storm.

I see her figure as she steals from her work, stops at my door, and retreats with hesitating steps. She comes again, stands outside leaning against the wall, then slowly enters the room and sits down. With head bent, she plies her needle in silence; but soon stops her work, and looks out of the window through the rain at the blurred line of trees.

Only this-one hour of a rainy noon filled with shadows and song and silence.

❖❖❖

WHILE stepping into the carriage she turned her head and threw me a swift glance of farewell.

This was her last gift to me. But where can I keep it safe from the trampling hours?

Must evening sweep this gleam of anguish away, as it will the last flicker of fire from the sunset?'

Ought it to be washed off by the rain, as treasured pollens are from heart-broken flowers?

Leave kingly glory and the wealth of the rich to death. But may not tears keep ever fresh the memory of a glance flung through a passionate moment?

'Give it to me to keep,' said my song; 'I never touch kings' glory or the. wealth of the rich, but these small things are mine for ever.'

❖❖❖

YOU give yourself to me, like a flower that blossoms at night, whose presence is known by the dew that drips from it, by the odour shed through the darkness, as the first steps of Spring are by the buds that thicken the twigs.

1. The woman friend of a woman.
2. The name of the poet.

You break upon my thought like waves at the high tide, and my heart is drowned under surging songs.
My heart knew of your coming, as the night feels the approach of dawn. The clouds are aflame and my sky fills with a great revealing flood.

❖❖❖

MY songs are like bees; they follow through the air some fragrant trace-some memory-of you, to hum, around your shyness, eager for its hidden store.
When the freshness of dawn droops in the sun, when in the noon the air hangs low with heaviness and the forest is silent, my songs return home, their languid wings dusted with gold.

❖❖❖

I THINK I shall stop startled if ever we meet after our next birth, walking in the light of a far-away world.
I shall know those dark eyes then as morning stars, and yet feel that they have belonged to some unremembered evening sky of a former life.
I shall know that the magic of your face is not all its own, but has stolen the passionate light that was in my eyes at some immemorial meeting, and then gathered from my love a mystery that has now forgotten its origin.

❖❖❖

LAY' down your lute, my love, leave your arms free to embrace me.
Let your touch bring my overflowing heart to my body's utmost brink.
Do not bend your neck and turn away your face, but offer up a kiss to me, which has been like some perfume long closed in a bud.
Do not smother this moment under vain words, but let our hearts quake in a rush of silence sweeping all thoughts to the shoreless delight.

❖❖❖

YOU have made me great with your love, though I am but one among the many, drifting in the common tide, rocking in the fluctuant favour of the world.
You have given me a seat where poets of all time bring their tribute, and lovers with deathless names greet one another across the ages.
Men hastily pass me in the market,-never noting how my body has grown precious with your caress, how I carry your kiss within, as the sun carries in its orb the fire of the divine touch and shines for ever.

❖❖❖

I HAVE donned this new robe to-day because my body feels like singing.
It is not enough that I am .given to my love once and for ever, but out of that I must fashion new gifts every day; and shall I not seem a fresh offering, dressed in a new robe?
My heart, like the evening sky, has its endless passion for colour, and therefore I change my veils, which have now the green of the cool young grass and now that of the winter rice.
To-day my robe is tinted with the rain-rimmed blue of the sky. It brings to my limbs the colour of the boundless, the colour of the oversea hills; and it carries in its folds the delight of summer clouds flying in the wind.

❖❖❖

I THOUGHT I would write love's words in their own colour; but that lies deep in the heart, and tears are pale.
Would you know them, friend, if the words were colourless?
I thought I would sing love's words to their own tune, but that sounds only in my heart, and my eyes are silent.
Would you know them, friend, if there were no tune?

❖❖❖

IN the night the song came to me; but you were not there.
It found the words for which I had been seeking all day. Yes, in the stillness a moment after dark they throbbed into music, even as the stars then began to pulse with light; but you were not there. My hope was to sing it to you in the morning; but, try as I might, though the music came, the words hung back, when you were beside me.

❖❖❖

OUR life sails on the uncrossed sea whose waves chase each other in an eternal hide-and-seek.
It is the restless sea of change, feeding its foaming flocks to lose them over and over again, beating its hands against the calm of the sky.
Love, in the centre of this circling war-dance of light and dark, yours is that green island, where the sun kisses the shy forest shade and silence is wooed by birds' singing.

III

MY HEART IS a flute he has played on. If ever it fall into other hands let him fling it away.
My lover's flute is dear to him, therefore if to-day alien breath have entered it and sounded strange notes, let him break it to pieces and strew the dust with them.

❖❖❖

IN LOVE THE aim is neither pain nor pleasure but love only.
While free love binds, division destroys it, for love is what unites.
Love is lit from love as fire front fire, but whence came the first flame?
In your being it leaps under the rod of pain.
Then, when the hidden fire flames forth, the in and the out are one and all barriers fall in ashes.
Let the pain glow fiercely, burst from the heart and beat back darkness, need you be afraid?
The poet says, 'Who can buy love without paying its price? When you fail to give yourself you make the whole world miserly.'

❖❖❖

EYES SEE ONLY dust and earth, but feel with the heart, and know pure joy.

The delights blossom on all sides in every form, but where is your heart's thread to make a wreath of them?
My master's flute sounds through all things, drawing me out of my lodgings wherever they may be, and while I listen I know that every step I take is in my master's house.
For he is the sea, he is the river that leads to the sea, and he is the landing-place.

❖❖❖

I AM THE BOAT, you are the sea, and also the boatman.
Though you never make the shore, though you let me sink, why should I be foolish and afraid?
Is reaching the shore a greater prize than losing myself with you?
If you are only the haven, as they say, then what is the sea?
Let it surge and toss me on its waves, I shall be content.
I live in you whatever and however you appear. Save me or kill me as you wish, only never leave me in other hands.

IV

COME, SPRING, reckless lover of the earth, make the forest's heart pant for utterance!
Come in gusts of disquiet where flowers break open and jostle the new leaves!
Burst, like a rebellion of light, through the night's vigil, through the lake's dark dumbness, through the dungeon under the dust, proclaiming freedom to the shackled seeds!
Like the laughter of lightning, like the shout of a storm, break into the midst of the noisy town; free stifled word and unconscious effort, reinforce our flagging fight, and conquer death!

❖❖❖

I HAVE LOOKED on this picture in many a month of March when the mustard is in bloom-this lazy line of the water and the grey of the sand beyond, the rough path along the river-bank carrying the comradeship of the field into the heart of the village.
I have tried to capture in rhyme the idle whistle of the wind, the beat of the oar-strokes from a passing boat.
I have wondered in my mind how simply it stands before me, this great world: with what fond and familiar ease it fills my heart, this encounter with the Eternal Stranger.

❖❖❖

IN THE EVENING after they have brought their cattle home, they sit on the grass before their huts to know that you are among them unseen, to repeat in their songs the name which they have fondly given you.
While kings' crowns shine and disappear like falling stars, around village huts your name rises through the still night from the simple hearts of your lovers whose names are unrecorded.

❖❖❖

HOW OFTEN, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over you, sharing in the happiness of each green blade that raises its signal banner in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky!
I feel as if I had belonged to you ages before I was born. That is why, in the days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of rice, I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere, and even to hear voices as of playfellows echoing from the remote and deeply veiled past.
When, in the evening, the cattle return to their folds, raising dust from the meadow paths, as the moon rises higher than the smoke ascending from the village huts, I feel sad as for some great separation that happened in the first morning of existence.

V

IN THE evening my little daughter heard a call from her companions below the window.
She timidly went down the dark stairs holding a lamp in her hand, shielding it behind her veil.
I was sitting on my terrace in the star-lit night of March, when at a sudden cry I ran to see.
Her lamp had gone out in the dark spiral staircase. I asked, 'Child, why did you cry?'
From below she answered in distress, 'Father, I have lost myself!'
When I came back to the terrace under the star-lit night of March, I looked at the sky, and it seemed that a child was walking there treasuring many lamp behind her veils.
If their light went out, she would suddenly stop and a cry would sound from sky to sky, 'Father, I have lost myself!'

❖❖❖

IN THE DEPTHS of the forest the ascetic practised penance with fastclosed eyes; he intended to deserve Paradise.
But the girl who gathered twigs brought him fruits in her skirt, and water from the stream in cups made of leaves..
The days went on, and his penance grew harsher till the fruits remained untasted, the water untouched: and the girl who gathered twigs was sad.
The Lord of Paradise heard that a man had dared to aspire to be as the Gods. Time after time he had fought the Titans, who were his peers, and kept them out of his kingdom; yet he feared a man whose power was that of suffering.
But he knew the ways of mortals, and he planned a temptation to decoy this creature of dust away from his adventure.
A breath from Paradise kissed the limbs of the girl who gathered twigs, and her youth ached with a sudden rapture of beauty, and her thoughts hummed like the bees of a rifled hive.
The time came when the ascetic should leave the forest for a mountain cave, to complete the rigour of his penance.
When he opened his eyes in order to start on his journey, the girl appeared to him like a verse familiar, yet forgotten, and which an added melody made strange. The ascetic rose from his seat and told her that it was time he left the forest.
'But why rob the of my chance to serve you?' she asked with

tears in her eyes.
He sat down again, thought for long, and remained on where her was.
That night remorse kept the girl awake. She began to dread her power and hate her triumph, yet her mind tossed on the waves of turbulent delight.
In the morning she came and saluted the ascetic and asked his blessing, saying she must leave him.
He gazed on her face in silence, then said, 'Go, and may your wish be fulfilled.'
For years he sat alone till his penance was complete.
The Lord of the Immortals carne down to tell him that he had won Paradise.
'I no longer need it,' said he.
The God asked him what greater reward he desire.
'I want the girl who gathers twigs.'

❖❖❖

WHEN LIKE A flaming scimitar the hill stream has been sheathed in gloom by the evening, suddenly a flock of birds passes overhead, their loud-laughing wings hurling their flight like an arrow among stars.
It startles a passion for speed in the heart of all motionless things; the hills seem to feel in their bosom the anguish of storm-clouds, and trees long to break their rooted shackles.
For me the flight of these birds has rent a veil of stillness, and reveals an immense flutter in this deep silence.
I see these hills and forests fly across time to the unknown, and darkness thrill into fire as the stars wing by.
I feel in my own being the rush of the sea-crossing bird, cleaving a way beyond the limits of life and death, while the migrant world cries with a myriad voices, 'Not here, but somewhere else, in the bosom of the Faraway.'

❖❖❖

I FEEL THAT my heart will leave its own colour in all your scenes, O Earth, when I bid you farewell. Some notes of mine will be added to your seasons' melody, and my thoughts will breathe unrecognised through the cycle of shadows and sunshine..
In far-distant days summer will come to the lovers' garden, but they will not know that their flowers have borrowed an added beauty from my songs, nor that their love for this world has been deepened by mine.

❖❖❖

MY EYES feel the deep peace of this sky, and there stirs through me what a tree feels when it holds out its leaves like cups to be filled with sunshine.
A thought rises in my mind, like the warm breath from grass in the sun; it mingles with the gurgle of lapping water and the sigh of weary wind in village lanes,-the thought that I have lived along with the whole life of this world and have given to it my own love and sorrows.

❖❖❖

GIVE ME the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer-the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of danger, honour me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood which sacrifices daily to thee.
Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer-the confidence that belongs to life in death, to victory in defeat, to the power hidden in frailest beauty, to that dignity in pain which accepts hurt but disdains to return it.

Stray Birds

I

STRAY birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.
And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.

❖❖❖

IF YOU shed tears when you miss the sun, you also miss the stars.

❖❖❖

HER wistful face haunts my. dreams like the rain at night.

❖❖❖

.LISTEN, my heart, to the whispers of the world with which it makes love to you.

II

DO NOT seat your love upon a precipice because it is high.

❖❖❖

THESE LITTLE thoughts are the rustle of leaves; they have their whisper of joy in my mind.

❖❖❖

LIFE FINDS its wealth by the claims of the world, and its worth by the claims of love.

❖❖❖

DO NOT blame your food because you have no appetite.

❖❖❖

YOU SMILED and talked to me of nothing and I felt that for this I had been waiting long.

❖❖❖

THE FISH in the water is silent, the animal on the earth is noisy, the bird in the air is singing, But Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth and the music of the air.

III

I THANK thee that I am none of the wheels of power but I am one with the living creatures that are crushed by it.

❖❖❖

LIKE THE meeting of the seagulls and the waves we meet and come near. The seagulls fly off, the waves roll away and we depart.

❖❖❖

WE READ the world wrong and say that it deceives us.

❖❖❖

YOUR VOICE, my friend, wanders in my heart, like me muffled sound of the sea among these listening pines.

❖❖❖

LET LIFE be beautiful like summer flowers and death like autumn leaves.

❖❖❖

THE HILLS are like shouts of children who raise their arms, trying to catch stars.

❖❖❖

THIS RAINY evening the wind is restless. I look at the swaying branches and ponder over the greatness of all things.

❖❖❖

ONE SAD voice has its nest among the ruins of the years. It sings to me in the night,-'I loved you.'

❖❖❖

MY THOUGHTS shimmer with these shimmering leaves and my heart sings with the touch of this sunlight; my life is glad to be floating with all things into the blue of space, into the dark of time.

IV

GOD'S GREAT power is in the gentle breeze, not in the storm.

❖❖❖

THE WORLD has kissed my soul with its pain, asking for its return in songs.

❖❖❖

WOMAN, IN your laughter you have the music of the fountain of life.

❖❖❖

A MIND all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it.

V

MEN ARE cruel, but Man is kind.

❖❖❖

OUR NAMES are the light that glows on the sea waves at night and then dies without leaving its signature.

❖❖❖

MAN is worse than an animal when he is an animal.

❖❖❖

LET MY thoughts come to you, when I am gone, like the afterglow of sunset at the margin of starry silence.

❖❖❖

WE LIVE in this world when we love it.

❖❖❖

The Child

1

'WHAT OF THE night?' they ask.

No answer comes.

For the blind Time gropes in a maze and knows not its path or purpose.

The darkness in the valley stares like the dead eye-sockets of a giant, the clouds like a nightmare oppress the sky, and the massive shadows lie scattered like the torn limbs of the night.

A lurid glow waxes and wanes on the horizon; is it an ultimate threat from an alien star, or an elemental hunger licking the sky?

Things are deliriously wild, they are a noise whose grammar is a groan, and words smothered out of shape and sense.

They are the refuse, the rejections, the fruitless failures of life, abrupt ruins of prodigal pride,- fragments of a bridge over the oblivion of a vanished stream, godless shrines that shelter reptiles, marble steps that lead to blankness.

Sudden tumults rise in the sky and wrestle and startled shudder runs along the sleepless hours.

Are they from desperate floods hammering against their cave walls, or from some fanatic storms whirling and howling incantations?

Are they the cry of an ancient forest flinging up its hoarded fire in a last extravagant suicide, or screams of a paralytic crowd scourged by lunatics blind and deaf?

Underneath the noisy terror a stealthy hum creeps up like bubbling volcanic mud, a mixture of sinister whispers, rumours and slanders, and hisses of derision.

The men gathered there are vague like torn pages of an epic.

Groping in groups or single, their torchlight tattoos their faces in chequered lines, in patterns of frightfulness.

The maniacs suddenly strike their neighbours on suspicion and a hubbub of an indiscriminate fight bursts forth echoing from hill to hill.

The women weep and wail, they cry that their children are lost in wilderness of contrary paths with confusion at the end.

Others defiantly ribald shake with raucous laughter their lascivious limbs unshrinkingly loud, for they think that nothing matters.

2

THERE on the crest of the hill
stand the Man of faith amid the snow-white silence,
He scans the sky for some signal of light,

and when the clouds thicken and the nightbirds
scream as they fly,
he cries, 'Brothers, despair not, for Man is great.'
But they never heed him, for they believe that the elemental brute is eternal and goodness in its depth is darkly cunning in deception
When beaten and wounded they cry, 'Brother, where art thou?'
The answer comes, 'I am by your side!
But they cannot see in the dark and they argue that the voice is of their own desperate desire, that men are ever condemned to fight for phantoms in an interminable desert of mutual menace.

3

THE CLOUDS part, the morning star appears in the East,
a breath of relief springs up from the heart of the earth,
the murmur of leaves ripples along the forest path, and the early bird sings.
The time has come,' proclaims the Man of faith.
'the time for what?'
'For the pilgrimage.'
They sit and think, they know not the meaning, and yet they seem to understand according to their desires.
The touch of the dawn goes deep into the soil and life shivers along through the roots of all things.
To the pilgrimage of fulfilment,' a small voice whispers, nobody knows whence.
Taken up by the crowd it swells into a mighty meaning.
Men raise their heads and look up,
women lift their arms in reverence,
children clap their hands and laugh.
The early glow of the sun shines like a golden garland
on the forehead of the Man of faith,
and they all cry: 'Brother, we salute thee!'

4

MEN BEGIN to gather from all quarters,
from across the seas, the mountains and pathless wastes,
They come from the valley of the Nile and the banks of the Ganges,
from the snow-sunk uplands of Thibet,
from high-walled cities of glittering towers,
from the dense dark tangle of savage wilderness.
Some walk, some ride on camels, horses and elephants, on chariots with banners vieing with the clouds of dawn, The priests of all creeds burn incense, chanting verses as they go. The monarchs march at the head of their armies, lances flashing in the sun and drums beating loud. Ragged beggars and courtiers pompously decorated, agile young scholars and teachers burdened with learned age jostle each other in the crowd.
Women come chatting and laughing,
mothers, maidens and brides,
with offerings of flowers and fruit,
sandal paste and scented water.
Mingled with them is the harlot,
shrill of voice and loud in tint and tinsel.
The gossip is there who secretly poisons the well of human sympathy and chuckles.
The maimed and the cripple join the throng with the blind and the sick.
the dissolute, the thief and the man who makes a trade of his God for profit and mimics the saint.
'The fulfilment!'.
They dare not talk aloud,
but in their minds they magnify their own greed,
and dream of boundless power,
of unlimited impunity for pilfering and plunder,
and eternity of feast for their unclean gluttonous flesh.

5

THE MAN of faith moves on along pitiless paths strewn with flints over scorching sands and steep mountainous tracks.
They follow him, the strong and the weak, the aged and young, the rulers of realms, the tillers of the soil. Some grow weary and footsore, some angry and suspicious. The ask at every dragging step, 'How much further is the end?' The Man of faith sings in answer; they scowl and shake their fists and yet they cannot resist him; the pressure of the moving mass and indefinite hope push them forward.
They shorten their sleep and curtail their rest,
they out-vie each other in their speed,
they are ever afraid lest they may be too late for their chance while others be more fortunate.
The days pass,
the ever-receding horizon tempts them with renewed lure of the unseen till they are sick.
The faces harden, their curses grow louder and louder.

6

IT IS NIGHT.
The travellers spread their mats on the ground under the banyan tree. A gust of wind blows out the lamp and the darkness deepens like a sleep into a swoon. Someone from the crowd suddenly stands up and pointing to the leader with merciless finger breaks out:
'False prophet, thou hast deceived us!' Others take up the cry one by one, women hiss their hatred and men growl. At last one bolder than others suddenly deals him a blow. They cannot see his face, but fall upon him in a fury of destruction and hit him till he lies prone upon the ground his life extinct. The night is still, the sound of the distant waterfall comes muffled, and a faint breath of jasmine floats in the air.

7

THE PILGRIMS are afraid.
The women begins to cry, the men in an agony of wretchedness shout at them to stop.
Dogs break out barking and are cruelly whipped into silence broken by moans.
The night seems endless and men and women begin to wrangle as to who among them was to blame.

They shriek and shout and as they are ready to unsheathe their knives the darkness pales, the morning light overflows the mountain tops.
Suddenly they become still and gasp for breath as they gaze at the figure lying dead.
The women sob out loud and men hide their faces in their hands. A few try to slink away unnoticed, but their crime keeps them chained to their victim. They ask each other in bewilderment, 'Who will show us the path?'
The old man from the East bends his head and says: 'The Victim.' They sit still and silent. Again speaks the old man,
'We refused him in doubt, we killed him in anger, now we shall accept him in love,
for in his death he lives in the life of us all, the great Victim.'
And they all stand up and mingle their voices and sing, 'Victory to the Victim.'

8

'TO THE pilgrimage' calls the young,
'to love, to power, to knowledge, to wealth overflowing,'
'We shall conquer the world and the world beyond this,' they all cry exultant in a thundering cataract of voices,
The meaning is not the same to them all, but only the impulse, the moving confluence of wills that recks not death and disaster.
No longer they ask for their way,
no more doubts are there to burden their minds or weariness to clog their feet.
The spirit of the Leader is within them and ever beyond them-the Leader who has crossed death and all limits.
They travel over the fields where the seeds are sown, by the granary where the harvest is gathered, and across the barren soil where famine dwells and skeletons cry for the return of their flesh.
They pass through populous cities humming with life, through dumb desolation hugging its ruined past, and hovels for the unclad and unclean,
a mockery of home for the homeless.
They travel through long hours of the summer day, and as the light wanes in the evening they ask the man who reads the sky:
'Brother, is yonder the tower of our final hope and peace?' The wise mail shakes his head and says:
'It is the last vanishing cloud of the sunset.'
'Friends,' exhorts they young, 'do not stop.
Through the night's blindness we must struggle into the Kingdom of living light.'
They go on in the dark. The road seems to know its own meaning and dust underfoot dumbly speaks of direction. The stars-celestial wayfarers-sing in silent chorus: 'Move on, comrades!'
In the air floats the voice of the Leader:
'The goal is nigh.'

9

THE FIRST flush of dawn glistens on the dew-dripping leaves of the forest.
The man who reads the sky cries:
'Friends, we have come!'
They stop and look around.
On both sides of the road the corn is ripe to the horizon, -the glad golden answer of the earth to the morning light. The current of daily life moves slowly between the village near the hill and the one by the river bank.
The potter's wheel goes round, the woodcutter brings fuel to the market. the cow-herd takes his cattle to the pasture, and the woman with the pitcher on her head walks to the well.
But where is the Ring's castle, the mine of gold, the secret book of magic.
the sage who knows love's utter wisdom?
'The stars cannot be wrong,' assures the reader of the sky.
'Their signal points to that spot.'
And reverently he walks to a wayside spring
from which wells up a stream of water, a liquid light,
like the morning melting into a chorus of tears and laughter.
Near it in a palm grove surrounded by a strange hush stands a leafthatched hut,
at whose portal sits the poet of the unknown shore, and sings: 'Mother, open the gate!'

10

A RAY of morning sun strikes aslant at the door.
The assembled crowd feel in their blood the primaeval chant of creation: 'Mother, open the gate!' The gate opens. The mother is seated on a straw bed with, the babe on her lap, Like the dawn with the morning star.
The sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside falls on the head of the child.
The poet strikes his lute and sings out:
'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.' They kneel down,-the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner, the wise and the foot; and cry: 'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.' The old man from the East murmurs to himself: 'I have seen!"

Collected Poems & Plays

I

THIS EVIL DAY

AGE AFTER AGE, hast Thou, O Lord, sent Thy messengers into this pitiless world, who have left their word: 'Forgive all. Love all. Cleanse your hearts from the blood-red stains of hatred.'
Adorable are they, ever to be remembered; yet from the outer door have I turned them away to-day- this evil day-with unmeaning salutation.
Have I not seen secret malignance strike down the helpless under the cover of hypocritical night?
Have I not heard the silenced voice of justice weeping in

solitude at might's defiant outrages?
Have I not seen in what agony reckless youth, running mad, has vainly shattered its life against insensitive rocks?
Choked is my voice, mute are my songs to-day, and darkly my world lies imprisoned in a dismal dream; and I ask Thee, O Lord, in tears: 'Hast Thou Thyself forgiven, hast even Thou loved those who are poisoning Thy air, and blotting out Thy light?'

❖❖❖

BORO-BUDUR[1]

THE SUN shone on a far-away morning, while the forest murmured its hymn of praise to light; and the hills, veiled in vapour, dimly glimmered like earth's dream in purple.
The King sat alone in the coconut grove, his eyes drowned in a vision, his heart exultant with the rapturous hope of spreading the chant of adoration along the unending path of time:
'Let Buddha by my refuge.'
His words found utterance in a deathless speech of delight, in an ecstasy of forms.
The island took it upon her heart; her hill raised it to the sky.
Age after age, the morning sun daily illumined its great meaning.
While the harvest was sown and reaped in the near-by fields by the stream, and life, with its chequered light, made pictured shadows on its epochs of changing screen, the prayer, once uttered in the quiet green of an ancient morning, ever rose in the midst of the hide-and-seek of tumultuous time:
'Let Buddha be my refuge.'
The Icing, at the end of his days, is merged in the shadow of a nameless night among the unremembered, leaving his salutation in an imperishable rhythm of stone which ever cries:
'Let Buddha be my refuge.'
Generations of pilgrims came on the quest of an immortal voice for their worship; and this sculptured hymn, in a grand symphony of gestures, took up their lowly names and uttered for them:
'Let Buddha be my refuge.'
The spirit of those words has been muffled in mist in this mocking age of unbelief, and the curious crowds gather here to gloat in the gluttony of an irreverent sight.
Man to-day has no peace; his heart arid with pride. He, clamours for an ever-increasing speed in a fury of chase for objects that ceaselessly run, but never reach a meaning.
And now is the time when he must come groping at last to the sacred silence, which stands still in the midst of surging centuries of noise, till he feels assured that in an immeasurable love dwells the final meaning of Freedom, whose prayer is:
'Let Buddha be my refuge.'

1. Boro-budur is the great Buddhist -*stupa* built on a hill-top in the island of Java.

❖❖❖

THE SON OF MAN

FROM his eternal seat Christ comes down to this earth, where, ages ago, in the bitter cup of death He poured his deathless life for those who came to the call and those who remained away.
He looks about Him, and sees the weapons of evil that wounded His own age.
The arrogant spikes and spears, the slim, sly knives, the scimitar in diplomatic sheath, crooked and cruel, are hissing and raining sparks as they are sharpened on monster wheels.
But the most fearful of them ail, at the hands of the slaughterers, are those on which has been engraved His own name, that are fashioned from the texts of His own words fused in the fire of hatred and hammered by hypocritical greed.
He presses His hand upon His heart; He feels that the age-long moment of His death has not yet ended, that new nails, turned out in countless numbers by those who are learned in cunning craftsmanship, pierce Him in every joint.
They had hurt Him once, standing at the shadow of their temple; they are born anew in crowds.
From before their sacred altar they shout to the soldiers, 'Strike!'
And the Son of Man in agony cries, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

FREEDOM

FREEDOM from fear is the freedom I claim for you, my Motherland!-fear, the phantom demon, shaped by your own distorted dreams;
Freedom from the burden of ages, bending your head, breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning call of the future;
Freedom from shackles of slumber wherewith you fasten yourself to night's stillness, mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous path;
Freedom from the anarchy of destiny, whose sails are weakly yielded to blind uncertain winds, and the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as Death;
Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world, where movements are started through brainless wires, repeated through mindless habits; where figures wait with patient obedience for a master of show to be stirred into a moment's mimicry of life.

❖❖❖

THE news of my love is abroad among the spring flowers.
It brings to my mind the old songs.
My heart of a sudden has put on green leaves of desire.
My love came not but her touch is on my hair, and her voice comes across the fragrant fields in murmurs of April.
Her gaze is here in the shy, but where are her eyes?
Her kisses are in the air, but where are her lips?'

❖❖❖

IF THERE is nothing but pain in loving then why is this love? What folly is this to claim her heart because you have offered her your own! With the desire burning in your blood and madness glowing in your eyes why is this circling of a desert? He Bankers for nothing in the world who is in possession of himself; the sweet air of the spring is for him, the flowers, the bird songs; but love comes like a devouring shadow effacing the whole world, eclipsing life and youth. Then why seek this mist that darkens existence?

❖❖❖

I HAVE ever loved thee in a hundred forms and times,
Age after age, in birth following birth.
The chain of songs that my fond heart did weave
Thou graciously didst take around thy neck,
Age after age, in birth following birth.
When I listen to the tales of the primitive past,
The love-pangs of the far distant times,
The meetings and partings of the ancient ages,
I see thy form gathering light
Through the dark dimness of Eternity
And appearing as a star ever fixed in the memory of the All.
We two have come floating by the twin currents of love
That well up from the inmost heart of the Beginningless.
We two have played in the lives of myriad lovers
In tearful solitude of sorrow,
In tremulous shyness of sweet union,
in old old love ever renewing its life.
The on-rolling flood of the love eternal
Hath at last found its perfect final course.
All the joys and sorrows and longings of heart,
All the memories of the moments of ecstasy,
All the love-lyrics of poets of all climes and times
Have come from the everywhere
And gathered in one single love at thy feet.

❖❖❖

STRUCK with the curse in mid-wave of your tumultuous passion, your life stilled into a stone, clean, cool and impassive.
You took your sacred bath of dust, plunging deep into the primitive peace of the earth.
You lay down in the dumb immense where faded days drop, like dead flowers with seeds, to sprout again into new dawns.
You felt the thrill of the sun's kiss with the roots of grass and trees that are like infant's fingers clasping at mother's breast.
In the night, when the tired children of dust came back to the dust, their rhythmic breath touched you with the large and placid motherliness of the earth.
Wild weeds twined round you their bonds of flowering intimacy.
You were lapped by the sea of life whose ripples are the leaves' flutter, bees' flight, grasshoppers' dance and tremor of moths' wings.
For ages you kept your ear to the ground, counting the footsteps of the unseen comer, at whose touch silence flames into music.
Woman, the sin has stripped you naked, the curse has washed you pure, you have risen into a perfect life.
The dew of that unfathomed night trembles on your eyelids, the mosses of ever-green years cling to your hair.
You have the wonder of new birth acid the wonder of old time in your awakening.
Your are young as the new-born flowers and old as the hills.

❖❖❖

I THOUGHT I had something to say to her when our eyes met in the road.
But she passed away, and it rocks day and night like an idle boat on every wave of the hours- the thing that I had to say to her.
It seems to sail in the autumn clouds in an endless quest and to bloom into evening flowers seeking its lost words in the sunset.
It twinkles like fireflies in my heart to find its own meaning in the dusk of despair-
the thing that I had to say to her.

❖❖❖

LITTLE songs and little things come to my mind this morning.
I seem to be floating on a stream in a boat, passing by the world on both banks.
Every little scene gives a sigh and says, 'I go.'
World's pleasure and pain, like brother and sister, lift their pathetic eyes upon my face from afar.
Homely love peeps from her cottage corner to give me her passing glance.
With eager eyes I gaze from my heart's window on to the heart of the world.
And feel that with all its good and bad it is lovable.'

II

YOU HAVE watched all night alone, your eyes are tired, sweet one!
The light of the lamp has paled, it flickers in the breeze of the dawn.
Wipe away your tears, my friend, and draw up the veil over your breast.
The autumn morning is still, the smell of the woods is in the air, the grassy path is caressingly tender.
Let the wreath of the forlorn night lie crumpled upon the bed.
Come out in the world of the morning, gather fresh flowers in your skirt and put on new blossoms in your hair.

❖❖❖

I THREW AWAY my heart in the world; you took it up.
I sought for joy and gathered sorrow, you gave me sorrow and I found joy.
My heart was scattered in pieces, you picked them up in your hand and strung them in a thread of love.
You let me wander from door to door to show me at last how

near you are.
Your love plunged me into the deep trouble.
When I raised my head I found I was at your door.

❖❖❖

MY HEART, like a peacock on a rainy day, spreads its plumes tinged with rapturous colours of thoughts,
and in its ecstasy seeks some vision in the sky,-with a longing for one whom it does not know. My heart dances.
The clouds rumble from sky to sky-the shower sweeps horizons, the doves shiver in silence in their nests, the frogs croak in the flooded fields; and the clouds rumble.
O who is she on the king's tower that has loosened the braid of her dark hair, has drawn over her breasts the blue veil? She wildly starts and runs in the sudden flashes of lightning and lets the dark hair dance on her bosom.
Ah my heart dances like a peacock, the rain patters on the new leaves of summer, the tremor of the crickets' chirp troubles the shade of the tree, the river overflows its bank washing the village meadows. My heart dances.

❖❖❖

I ASK FOR AN audience from you, my King, in your solitary chamber.
Call me from the crowd.
When your gate was kept open for all I entered your courtyard with the bustling throng, and in the confusion found you not.
Now when at night they take up their lanterns and go by different roads to their different homes, allow me to linger here for a moment, standing at your feet, and hold up my lamp and see your face.

❖❖❖

YOU WILL LEAD me from star to star, to waken me in new mornings of love.
It is your love that draws out the flow of my being through the maze of channels of new life over your endless worlds.
You will startle me with new visions of fulfilment at every bend of the road and fashion my moments with immortal forms of joy.
The infinite life will never remain chained in unchanging shackles of immortality but will speed through death to death to countless new shrines of light in its eternal pilgrimage of love.

❖❖❖

THE NIGHT IS upon me.
My desires that wandered all day have come back to my heart like the murmur of the sea in the still evening air.
One lonely lamp is burning in any house in the dark.
The silence is in my blood.
I shut my eyes and see in my heart the beauty that is beyond all forms.

❖❖❖

BLESSED AM I that I am born to this land and that I had the luck to love her.
What care I if queenly treasure is not in tier store but precious enough is for me the living wealth of her love.
The best gift of fragrance to my heart is from her own flowers and I know not where else shines the moon that can flood my being with such loveliness.
The first light revealed to my eyes was from her own sky and let the same light kiss them before they are closed for ever.

❖❖❖

IF THEY ANSWER not to thy call walk alone,
if they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall,
O thou of evil luck,
open thy mind and speak out alone.
If they turn away, and desert you when crossing the wilderness,
O thou of evil luck,
trample the thorns under thy tread,
and along the blood-lined track travel alone.
If they do not hold up the light when the night is troubled with storm,
O thou of evil luck, with the thunder flame of pain ignite thine own heat and let it burn alone.

❖❖❖

IT MAN' BE that your loved ones will forsake you, but mind it not, my heart.
It may be that the creeper of your hope will be laid low in the dust all torn, its fruits wasted; but mind it not, my heart.
It may be that the dark night will overtake you before you reach the gate, and your attempts will ever be in vain to light your lamp.
When you tune your harp, the birds and the beasts of the wilderness will flock around you. It may be that your brothers will remain unmoved, but mind it not, my heart.
The walls are of stones, the doors barred. It may be that you will knock oft and again, yet it will not open,-but mind it not, my heart.

❖❖❖

FOR A MERE nothing fill me with gladness. Only hold my hand in your hand.
In the deepening night take up my heart and play with it as you wish. Bind me close to you with nothing.
I shall spread myself out at your feet and lie still.
I shall meet silence with silence under this sky.
1 shall become one with the night, clasping the earth to my breast.
Make my life glad with nothing.
The rains sweep the sky from end to end.
In the wild wet wind jasmines revel in their own perfume.
The cloud-hidden stars thrill in secret.
Let me fill my heart to the full with nothing but my own depth of joy.

❖❖❖

THOU ART THE ruler of the minds of all people, Thou Dispenser of India's destiny. Thy name rouses the hearts

of the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Maratha, of Dravida, Orissa and Bengal. It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of jumna and Ganges, And is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea. They pray for thy blessing and sing thy praise, Thou dispenser of India's destiny, Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Day and night, thy voice goes out from land to land,
Calling Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round thy throne
and Parsees, Mussalmans and Christians.
Offerings are brought to thy shrine by the East and the West
to be woven in a garland of love.
Thou bringest the hearts of all peoples into the harmony of
one life,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.
Eternal Charioteer, thou drivest man's history
along the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations.
Amidst all tribulations and terror
thy trumpet sounds to hearten those that despair And droop,
and guide all people in their paths of peril and pilgrimage.
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.
When the long dreary night was dense with gloom
and the country lay still in a stupor,
thy Mother's arms held her,
thy wakeful eyes bent upon her face,
till she was rescued from the dark evil dreams
that oppressed her spirit,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

❖❖❖

The night dawns, the sun rises in the East,
the birds sing, the morning breeze brings a stir of new life.
Touched by golden rays of they love
India wakes up and bends her head at thy feet.
Thou King of all Kings,
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

III

I KNOW THAT the flower one day shall blossom crowning
my thorns.
I know my sorrow shall spread its red rose-leaves opening its
heart to the sun.
The breeze of the south for which the sky kept watch for
weary days and nights shall suddenly make my heart
quiver.
My love shall bloom in a moment; my shame shall be no more
when the flower is ripe for offering.
And with the end of the night, at the touch of my friend it
will drop at his feet and spend its last petal in joy.

❖❖❖

THOU HAST come again to me in the burst of a sudden
storm, filling my sky with the shudder of thy shadowy
clouds.
The Sun is hidden, the stars are lost;
the red line of the road is merged in the mist of the
rain; the wail of the wind comes across the water.
Fitful showers, like ghastly fingers, strike the
chords of some unseen harp,
waking up the music of the dark,
sweeping my heart with a shiver of sounds.

❖❖❖

FORGIVE MY languor, O Lord,
if ever I lag behind
upon life's way.
Forgive my anguished heart
which trembles and hesitates
in its service.
Forgive my fondness
that lavishes its wealth
upon an unprofitable past.
Forgive these faded flowers
in my offering
that wilt in the fierce heat
of panting hours.

❖❖❖

THY CALL has sped over all countries of the world
and men have gathered around thy seat.
The day is come.
But where is India?
Does she still remain hidden, lagging behind?
Let her take up her burden and march with all.
Send her, mighty God, thy message of victory,
O Lord ever awake!
Those who defied suffering have crossed
the wilderness of death and have shattered
their prison of illusions.
The day is come.
But where is India?
Her listless aims are idle and ashamed
and futile her days and nights, lacking in joy of life.
Touch her with thy living breath,
O lord even awake!
The morning sun of the new age has risen.
Thy temple hall is filled with pilgrims.
The day is come.
But where is India?
She lies on the dust in dishonour,
deprived of her seat.
Remove her shame, and give her a place
in thy House of Man,
O Lord ever awake!
The world's highroads are crowded,
resounding with the roar of thy chariot wheels.
The sky is trembling with travellers' songs.
The day is come.
But where is India?
Doors are shut in her house age-worn,
feeble is her hope, her heart sunk in silence.
Send thy voice to her children who are dumb,

O Lord ever awake!
Peoples there are who have felt thy strength
in their own hearts and sinews
and have earned life's fulfilment, conquering fear.
The day is come.
But where is India?
Strike thy blow at her self-suspicion and despair!
Save her from the dread of her own pursuing shadow,
O Lord ever awake!

❖❖❖

THOU HAST given us to live.
Let its uphold this honour with all our strength and will;
For thy glory rests upon the glory that we are.
Therefore in thy name we oppose the power that would plant its banner upon our soul.
Let us know that thy light grows dim in the heart that bears its insult of bondage.
That the life, when it becomes feeble, timidly yields thy throne to untruth.
For weakness is the traitor who betrays our soul.
Let this be our prayer to thee-
Give us power to resist pleasure where it enslaves us.
To lift our sorrow up to thee as the summer holds its midday sun.
Make its strong that our worship may flower in love, and bear fruit in work.
Make us strong that we may not insult the weak and the fallen,
That we may hold our love high where all things aroused as are wooing the dust.
They fight and kill for self-love, giving it thy name.
They fight for hunger that thrives on brothers' flesh,
They fight against thine anger and die.
But let us stand firm and suffer with strength
for the True, for the Good, for the Eternal in man,
for thy Kingdom which is in the union of hearts,
for the freedom which is of the Soul.

❖❖❖

I SHALL NOT wait and watch in the house for thy coming,
but will go forth into the open,
for the petals fall from the drooping flowers and time flies to its end.
The wind is up, the water is ruffled.
Be swift and cut the rope,
let the boat drift in the midstream, for the time flies to its end.
The night is pale, the lonely moon is playing its ferry of dreams across the sky.
The path is unknown, but I heed it not.
My mind has the wings of freedom and I know that I shall cross the dark.
Let me but start on my journey, for the time flies to its end.

❖❖❖

I CANNOT remember my mother, .
only sometime in the midst of my play
a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
the tune of some song that she used to hum while rocking my cradle.
I cannot remember my mother,
but when in the early autumn morning
the smell of the *shiuli* flowers floats in the air,
the scent of the morning service in the temple
comes to me as the scent of my mother.
I cannot remember my mother,
only when from my bedroom window I send my eyes into the blue of the distant sky,
I feel that the stillness of my mother's gaze on my face has spread all over the sky.

❖❖❖

MY HEART sings at the wonder of my place
in this world of light and life;
at the feel in my pulse of the rhythm of creation
cadenced by the swing of the endless time.
I feel the tenderness of the grass in my forest walk,
the wayside flowers startle me:
that the gifts of the infinite are strewn in the dust
wakens my song in wonder.
I have seen, have heard, have lived;
in the depth of the known have felt
the truth that exceeds all knowledge
which fills my heart with wonder and I sing.

❖❖❖

YOU HAVE drunk the draught of songs that I poured for you,
and accepted the garland of my woven dreams.
My heart straying in the wilderness
was ever touched by the pain that was your own touch.
When my days are done, my leave-taking hushed in a final silence,
my voice will linger in the autumn light
and rain-laden clouds
with the message that we had met.

❖❖❖

THE FLUTE-SOUND of a holiday music
floats in the air.
It is not the time for me to sit and brood alone.
The *shiuli* branches shiver
with the thrill of an impending flower-time,
the touch of the dew is over the woodland.
On the fairy web in the forest path
the light and shadow feel each other.
The tall grass sends waves of laughter to the sky in its flowers,
and I gaze upon the horizon, seeking for my song.

IV

FILL YOUR eyes with the colours that ripple on beauty's stream, vain is your struggle to clutch them.
That which you chase with your desire is a shadow,
that which thrills your life-chords is music.
The wine they drink at the assembly of gods has no body, no measure.
It is in rushing brooks,

in flowering trees,
in the smile that dances at the corner of dark eyes.
Enjoy it in freedom.

❖❖❖

THOU ART a glimmer of gold from the dawn on my life's shore, a dew-drop on the first white flower of autumn.
Thou art a rainbow from the distant sky bending o'er dust,a dream of the crescent moon
touched with a white cloud,
thou art a secret of paradise
revealed by chance to the earth.
Thou art my poet's vision,
appearing from the days of my forgotten birth,
thou art the word that is never for utterance,
a freedom that comes in the form of a bondage,
for thou openest the door for me
to the beauty of a living light.

❖❖❖

THE WORLD today is wild the delirium of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,
O Thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
Let Love's lotus with its inexhaustible of honey
open its petals in thy light.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness wipe away
all dark stains from the heart of this earth.
Thou giver of immortal gifts
give us the power of renunciation
and claim from us our pride.
In the splendour of a new sunrise of wisdom
let the blind gain their sight
and let life come to the souls that are dead.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness wipe away
all dark stains from the heart of this earth.
Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,
with the poison of self-seeking,
with a thirst that knows no end.
Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads the
blood-red mark of hatred.
Touch them with thy right hand, make them one in spirit,
bring harmony into their life, bring 'rhythm of beauty.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness wipe away
all dark
stains from the heart of this earth.

❖❖❖

WE TWO lay sunk in the dusk of dreams;
the time of awakening has come
waiting for the last word from you.
Turn your face to me
and with a tear-dimmed glance
make the sorrow of parting
ever beautiful.
The morning ,will appear with its early star
on the far-distant sky of loneliness.
The pain of this farewell night has been captured in my *vina*-strings,
the lost glory of love will remain woven in my visions.
Open with your own hands the door towards final separation.

❖❖❖

ONCE again I wake up when the night has waned, when the world opens
all its petals once more, and this is an endless wonder.
Vast islands have sunk in the abyss unnamed, stars,
have been beggared of the last flicker of their light,
countless epochs have lost all their ladings.
World-conquerors have vanished into the shadow of a name behind dim legends,
great nations raised their towers of triumph
as a mere offering to the unappeasable hunger of the dust.
Among this dissolving crowd of the discarded
my forehead receives the consecration of light,
and this is an endless wonder.
I stand for another day with the Himalayas,
with constellations of stars.
I am here where in the surging sea-waves
the infuriate dance of the Terrible
is rhythmed with his boisterous laughter.
The centuries on which have flashed up and foundered kingly crowns like bubbles have left their signature on the bark of this aged tree, where I am allowed to sit under its ancient shade for one more day, and this is an endless wonder.

❖❖❖

I NEGLECTED to appraise your worth
being blindly sure of my possession.
The days followed each other and the nights
carrying your offerings to my feet
I looked at them through the corner of my eyes
as they were being sent to any storehouse.
April's honeysuckles added their scent to your gifts,
the full moon of the autumn night
touched them with its glimmer.
Often your poured the flood of your dark tresses upon my lap
and your eyes swam with tears while you said:
My tribute to you, my king, is pitifully meagre;
I have failed to give you more, not having any more to give.
The days follow each other and the nights
but you are no longer here today.
I cone to open at last my storehouse,
and take up the chain of the jewels,
that came from your hands on my neck.
My pride that remained indifferent
kisses the dust where you left your footprints.
Today I gain you truly

for with my sorrow I have paid the price of your love.

❖❖❖

IN THAT early dusk of a distracted age,
When God in scorn of his own workmanship
violently shook his head at his primitive efforts,
an impatient wave snatched you away, Africa,
from the bosom of the East,
and kept you brooding in a dense enclosure of
niggardly light,
guarded by giant trees.
There you slowly stored
the baffling mysteries of the wilderness
in the dark cellars of your profound privacy,
conned the signals of land
and water difficult to read;
and the secret magic of Nature invoked in your mind
magic rites from beyond the boundaries of
consciousness.
You donned the disguise of deformity to mock; the terrible,
and in a mimicry of a sublime ferocity
made yourself fearful to conquer fear.
You are hidden, alas, under a black veil,
which obscures your human dignity
to the darkened vision of contempt.
With man-traps stole upon you those hunters
whose fierceness was keener than the fangs of your wolves,
whose pride was blinder than your lightless forests.
The savage greed of the civilised stripped naked its
unashamed inhumanity.
You wept and your cry was smothered,
your forest trails became muddy with tears and blood,
while the nailed boots of the robbers
left their indelible prints
along the history of your indignity.
And all the time across the sea,
church bells were ringing in their towns and villages,
the children were lulled in mothers' arms,
and poets sang hymns to Beauty.
Today when on the western horizon
the sunset sky is stifled with dust-storm,
when the beast, creeping out of its dark den,
proclaims the death of the day with ghastly howls,
come, you poet of the fatal hour,
stand at that ravished woman's door,
ask for her forgiveness,
and let that be the last great word
in the midst of the delirium of a diseased Continent.

❖❖❖

THE WAR drums are sounded.
Men force their features into frightfulness and gnash
their teeth;
and before they rush out to gather raw human flesh
for death's larder
they march to the temple of Buddha, the
compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.
They pray for success;
for they must raise weeping and wailing
in their wake, sever ties of love,
plant flags on the ashes of desolated homes,
devastate the centres of culture
and shrines of beauty,
mark red with blood their trail
across green meadows and populous markets,
and so they march to the temple of Buddha, the
compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat and earth trembles.
They will punctuate each thousand of the maimed and killed
with the trumpeting of their triumph,
arouse demon's mirth at the sight
of the limbs torn bleeding from women and children;
and they pray that they may befog minds with untruths
and poison God's sweet air of breath,
and therefore they march to the temple of Buddha,
the compassionate,
to claim his blessings,
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat
and earth trembles.
MY BIRTHDAY!
With Death's passport in hand
it has emerged from its dive into the chasm of
nothingness
to breathe a while on the outskirts of existence.
From the worn-out chain have dropped the beads of
the past years
and with this newest birthday
begins the counting of the days of a new-born life.
The welcome offered today to me, a passer-by,
who tries to con the signal of the morning of an
unknown star
beckoning him towards an uncharted voyage,
is shared equally by his birthday and the time of his
death,
who mingle their lights like those of the morning star
and of the waning moon.
And I shall sing the same chant to both,
to death and to life.
Grant me, Mother Earth,
that my life's mirage born of burning thirst
may recede in the farthest horizon
and my unclean beggar's bowl empty into the dust
its accumulated defilements;
and as I start my crossing to the unrevealed shore
let me never look back with longing
on the last leavings of the feast of life.
Now when in this sleep-laden dusk of the day's end the
meaning is lost of the keen-bladed hunger with which
you had goaded me to drag life's chariot you begin to
withdraw your gifts from me one by one.
Slight has grown your need of me

and slight have you made my use
and set on my forehead the stamp of the discarded.
I feel it all and yet I know,
all this contumely of yours
will not reduce my worth to nought.
Cripple me, if you will,
shut out all light from my eyes,
shroud me in the shadow of infirmity,
yet in the dilapidated temple of my being
the ancient god will remain enthroned.
Work your havoc and pile up the wreck,
yet in the midst of this ruin
the luminous spot of inward joy
will burn bright as ever.
For it was fed day after day on the heavenly wine
which the gods
pour on earth through every sight and sound.
I had loved them all and sung of that love.
That love has lifted me above your bounds,
the love that shall abide, even though its words grow feeble,
defaced by constant use.
On this love of mine have traced their autographs the
pollen of the
mango-blossom,
and the dew-cooled fragrance of the *sephalika*
the twitterings of the *doels* in early dawn
and the rapturous touch of the beloved.
When I take my leave of you, O Earth,
take back from me, carefully reckoning,
all that you had vouchsafed to me,
the outfit and provision for a life's sojourn.
Yet never think that I hold your gifts but slight.
Ever grateful I am to this clay-cast mould
through which I have had my introduction to the Formless.
Whenever I have approached your doors
with the mind free from all coveting,
I have been made welcome to your heart.
I know your gifts are not for the greedy,
that you withhold the nectar hidden in your earthen pot
from the ravenous lips of those that hunger obscenely.
You are waiting, O Earth, with your immortal gifts,
to welcome the wayfarer who treads the arduous path
of detachment.
The gluttons who lust for flesh,
the traffickers in festering carrion,
have banded today in their orgies of violence, day and night.
Yet mockery tempts my smile, as of old,
at the pompous folly of the learned,
at the tyranny of the beggarly rich,
at the hideous make-up of the showy,
at the blasphemy that lampoons the divine in Man.
Enough of this. The bell tolls the last hour at your porch,
and my heart responds to the creaking of the opening gates of farewell.
In this deepening gloom of the twilight,
I will gather what flickering flames remain to light my fading consciousness,
to offer my last worship to you, O Earth,
under the gaze of the Seven Rishis.
And the incense of my last silent song will float round you.
Behind me will remain the *nagkeshar* plant
that has yet to flowers,
the anguished heart of this shore
yearning in vain for a ferry across,
and love's self-reproach at its tired memory
vanishing behind the screen of daily task.

❖❖❖

SHE IS the spirit of an Autumn evening,
robed in the gleams of the vanished sunset,
carrying the promise of the immense peace of the star,
guiding with her speechless ministry
the languid steps of the long lingering hours of the reluctant night
into the neighbourhood of the morning star.
Her tresses touched by the gentle breeze of the dawn,
that smell of the morning worship,
her sad and sweet face of the day's end
becomes radiant with the blessedness of the morning light.
BLESSINGS have I won in this life of
the Beautiful.
In the vessel of man's affection I taste His own divine nectar.
Sorrow, hard to bear,
has shown me the unhurt, unconquered soul.
On the day when I felt death's impending shadow,
fear's defeat has
not been mine.
The great ones of the Earth
have not deprived me of their touch,
their undying words have I stored in my heart.
Grace I had from the god of life:
this memory let me leave
in grateful words.

❖❖❖

One Hundred Poems of Kabir

I

I. 16. *santan jat na pucho nirgunyan*

IT IS NEEDLESS to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs;
For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking for God.
It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be;
The barber has sought God, the washer-woman, and the carpenter-
Even Raidas was a seeker after God.
The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.
Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction.

❖❖❖

I. 83. *canda jhalkai yahi ghat mahin*

THE MOON shines in my body, but my blind eyes cannot see it:
The moon is within me, and so is the sun.
The unstruck drum of Eternity is sounded within me; but my deaf ears cannot hear it.
So long as man clamours for the I and the Mine, his works are as naught:
When all love of the I and the Mine is dead, then the work of the Lord is done.
For work has no other aim than the getting of knowledge:
When that comes, then work is put away.
The flower blooms for the fruit: when the fruit comes, the flower withers.
The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself: it wanders in quest of grass.

❖❖❖

I. 131. *nis din khelat rahi sakhiyan sang*

I PLAYED day and night with my comrades, and now I am greatly afraid.
So high is my Lord's palace, my heart trembles to mount its stairs: yet I must not be shy, if I would enjoy His love.
My heart must cleave to my Lover; I must withdraw my veil, and meet Him with all my body:
Mine eyes must perform the ceremony of the lamps of love.
Kabir says: 'Listen to me, friend: he understands who loves. If you feel not
Love's longing for your Beloved One, it is vain to adorn your body, vain to put unguent on your eyelids.'

❖❖❖

II.59.*Janh cet aeet khambh dou*

BETWEEN THE poles of the conscious and the unconscious, there has the mind made a swing:
Thereon hang all beings and all worlds, and that swing never ceases its sway.
Millions of beings are there: the sun and the moon in their courses are there:
Millions of ages pass, and the swing goes on.
All swing! the sky and the earth and the air and the water; and the Lord Himself taking form:
And the sight of this has made Kabir a servant

II.22.*man to par utar kanh jaiho*

TO WHAT shore would you cross, O my heart? there is no traveler before you, there is no road:
Where is the movement, where is the rest, on that shore?
There is water; no boat, no boatman is there;
There is no so much as a rope to tow the boat, nor a man to draw it.
No earth, no sky, no time, no thing, is there: no shore, no ford!
There, there is neither body nor mind: and where is the place that shall still the thirst of the soul? You shall find naught in that emptiness.
Be strong, and enter into your own body: for there your foothold is firm.
Consider it well, O my heart! go ,not elsewhere.
Kabir says: 'Put all imaginations away, and stand fast in that which you are.'

11. 33. *ghar- ghar dipak barai*

LAMPS BURN in every house, O blind one! and you cannot see them.
One day your eyes shall suddenly be opened, and you shall see: and the fetters of death will fall from you.
There is nothing to say or to hear, there is nothing to do: it is he who is living, yet dead, who shall never die again.
Because he lives in solitude, therefore the Yogi says that his home is far away.
Your Lord is near: yet you are climbing the palm-tree to seek Him.
The Brahman priest goes from house to house and initiates people into faith:
Alas! the true fountain of life is beside you, and you have set up a stone to worship.
Kabir says: 'I may never express how sweet my Lord is. Yoga and the telling of beads, virtue and vice- these are naught to Him.'

II. **48. jis se raham apar jagat men**

MORE THAN all else do I cherish at heart that love which makes me to live a limitless life in this world.
It is like the lotus, which lives in the water and blooms in the water: yet the water cannot touch its petals, they open beyond its reach.
It is like a wife, who enters the fire at the bidding of love. She bums and lets others grieve, yet never dishonours love.
This ocean of the world is hard to cross: its waters are very deep. Kabir says: 'Listen to me, O Sadhu! few there are who have reached its end.'

❖❖❖

II. **95. *ya tarvar men ek pakheru***

ON THIS TREE is a bird: it dances in the joy of life.
None knows where it is: and who knows what the burden of its music may be?
Where the branches throw a deep shape, there does it have its nest: and it comes in the evening and flies away in the morning, and says not a word of that which it means.
None tell me of this bird that sings within me. It is neither coloured nor colourless: it has neither form nor outline:
It sits in the shadow of love.
It dwells within the Unattainable, the Infinite, and the Eternal; and no one marks when it comes and goes.
Kabir says: 'O brother Sadhu! deep is the mystery. Let wise men seek to know where rests that bird.'

I. 50. *bhram ka tala laga mahal re*

THE LOCK of error shuts the gate, open it with the key of love: Thus, by opening the door, thou shalt wake the Beloved. Kabir says: 'O brother! do not pass by such good fortune as this.'

❖❖❖

I. 65. *avadhu bhule ko ghar lawe*

HE IS DEAR to me indeed who can call back the wanderer to his home. In the home is the true union, in the home is enjoyment of life: why should I forsake my home and wander in the forest? If Brahman helps me to realise truth, verily I will find both bondage and deliverance in home.

He is dear to me indeed who has power to dive deep into Brahma; whose mind loses itself with ease in His contemplation.

He is dear to me who knows Brahma, and can dwell on His supreme truth in meditations; and who can ply the melody of the infinite by uniting love and renunciation in life.

Kabir says: 'The home is the abiding place; in the home is reality; the home helps to attain Him Who is real. So stay where you are, and all things shall come to you in time.'

II

I. 79. *tirath men to sab pani hai*

HERE is nothing but water at the holy bathing places; and I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them.

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak; I know, for I have cried aloud to them,

The Purana and the Koran are mere words; lifting up the curtain, I have seen. Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience; and he knows very well that all other things are untrue.

❖❖❖

I. 82. pani Vic *min piyasi*

LAUGH when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty: You do not see that the Real is in your home, and you wander from forest to forest listlessly!

Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Benares or to Mathura; if you do not find your soul, the world is unreal to you.

❖❖❖

I. 107. *calat mansa acal kinhi*

HAVE stilled my restless mind, and my heart is radiant: for in That-ness I have seen beyond

That-ness, in company I have seen the Comrade Himself.

Living in bondage, I have set myself free: I have broken away from the clutch of all narrowness.

Kabir says: 'I have attained the unattainable, and my heart is coloured with the colour of love.'

I 105. ***jo disai, so to hai nahin***

THAT which you see is not: and for that which is, you have no words.

Unless you see, you believe not: what is told you cannot accept.

He who is descrening knows by the word; and the ignorant stands gaping.

Some contemplate the Formless, and others mediate on form: but the wise man knows that Brahma is beyond both.

That beauty of His is not seen of the eye: that metre of His is not heard of the ear.

Kabir says: 'He who has found both love and reununication never descends to dath.'

❖❖❖

I. 130 ***sain bin dard kareje hoy***

When I am parted from my Beloved, my heart is full of misery: I have no comfort in the day, I have no sleep in the right. To whom shall I tell my sorrow?

The night is dark; the hours slip by. Because my Lord is absent, I start up and tremble with fear.

Kabir says: 'Listen, my friend! there is no other satisfaction, save in the encounter with the Beloved.'

❖❖❖

I. 20. ***man na rangaye***

The YOGI dyes his garments, instead of dyeing his mind in the colours of love:

He sits within the temple of the Lord, leaving Brahma to worship a stone.

He pierces holes in his ears, he has a great bear and matted locks, he looks like a goat:

He goes forth into the wilderness, killing all his desires, and turns himself into an eunuch.

He shaves his dead and dyes his garments; he reads the Gita and becomes a mighty talker.

Kabir says: 'You are going to the doors of death, bound hand and foot!'

❖❖❖

II 102. ***ham se raha na jay***

I Hear the melody of His flute, and I cannot contain myself:

The flower blooms, though it is not spring; and already the bee has received its invitation.

The sky roars and the lightning flashes, the waves arise in my heart,

The rain falls; and my heart longs for my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls, thither my heart has reached:

There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air.

Kabir says: 'My heart is dying, though it lives.'

❖❖❖

III. 26. ***for hira hirailwa kicad men***

THE JEWEL is lost in the mud, and all are seeking for it;
Some look for it in the east, and some in the west; some in the water and some amongst stones.
But the servant Kabir has appraised it at its true value, and has wrapped it with care in the end of the mantle of his heart.

❖❖❖

III. 30. ***are dil, prem rem nagar ka and na paya***

O MY HEART! you have not known all the secrets of this city of love; in ignorance you came, and in ignorance you return.
O my friend, what have you done with this life? You have taken on your head the burden heavy with stones, and who is to lighten it for you?
Your Friend stands on the other shore, but you never think in your mind how you may meet with Him:
The boat is broken, and yet you sit ever upon the bank; and thus you are beaten to no purpose by the waves.
The servant Kabir asks you to consider; who is there that shall befriend you at the last?
You are alone, you have no companion: you will suffer the consequences of your own deeds.

❖❖❖

III. 66. *na main dharmi nahin adharmi*

I AM NEITHER pious nor ungodly,
I live neither by law nor by sense,
I am neither a speaker nor hearer,
I am neither a servant nor master,
I am neither bond nor free,
I am neither detached nor attached.
I am far from none: I am near to none.
I shall go neither to hell nor to heaven.
I do all works; yet I am apart from all works.
Few comprehend my meaning: he who can comprehend, it, he sits unmoved.
Kabir seeks neither to establish nor to destrov.

❖❖❖

III. 84. *jhi jhi jantar bajai*

THE HARP gives forth murmurous music; and the dance goes on without hands and feet.
It is played without fingers, it is heard without ears: for He is the ear, and He is the listener.
The gate is locked, but within there is fragrance: and there the meeting is seen of none.
The wise shall understand it.

❖❖❖

18

Two Sisters

18

Sarmila

WOMEN are of two kinds, the mother-kind and the beloved-kind-so I have heard some learned men say. If a comparison may be drawn with the seasons, the mother is the rainy season. She brings the gift of water and of fruit, tempers the heat, and dissolving from the heights drives away the drought. She fills with plenty. The beloved, on the other hand, is the Spring. Deep its mystery, sweet its enchantment. Its restlessness rocks the blood into waves and swings over into the jewel-chamber of the mind where the solitary string of the golden *vina is* lying mute, waiting for the vibration to set the body and the mind ringing in some wordless melody.

Sasanka's wife Sarmila was the mother-kind. Her large, gentle eyes had a deep, steady look. The dark, well-rounded limbs had the comely grace of the first rain-laden clouds. The vermilion mark at the parting of her hair, the broad black border of her sari, the thick *makar*- shaped bangles on her wrists bespoke homely grace rather than elegance of style.

There was no outlying region in the territory of her husband's life over which her empire was not actively exercised. The extreme solicitude with which she had surrounded his life had made him careless. If by any chance the fountain pen was so misplaced on the table as not to be readily at hand the moment he needed it, his wife would have to discover it for him. If he could not remember where he had left his wrist-watch before going to bathe, his wife was sure to know where it was. So, too, she must be there to repair his error when, having put on socks of different shades, he was ready to go out. He mixed up English dates with Bengali months and sent out invitations to friends accordingly, and when the unexpected guests made their untimely appearance, it was his wife who had to bear the brunt of it. He knew full well that any negligence in the day's routine would be set right by her. To perpetrate negligences therefore had become second nature with him.

"It's the limit," his wife would complain, half derisively, half lovingly.

"Will you never learn?"

If he had learnt, Sarmila's days would have lain idle as unfilled land.

One day Sasanka was at some friend's, playing bridge. It was getting rather late at night. Suddenly his friends burst out laughing. "Ah! Here comes your bearer with the summons! Your time is up." Sure enough, there was the inevitable Mahesh, with his moustache gone grey and thehair still black on his head, wearing a vest, with a coloured duster on his shoulder, and a bamboo rod in his hand.

"The mistress has sent me to inquire if the master is here. She is afraid of some mishap to the master on his way back in the dark night. She has sent a lantern as well."

Irritated, Sasanka threw down the cards and got up. The friends taunted, "Ah, the lonely, unguarded male!"

On reaching home Sasanka addressed his wife in no gentle terms or peaceful manner. Sarmila quietly accepted the scolding. What was she to do? She simply could not get rid of her fear that when her husband was not with her, all sorts of impossible perils were conspiring to waylay him.

Another day some strange: had called on business. Every now and then a chit would be handed in. "You know you were indisposed yesterday. Do come in early to dinner." Sasanka lost his temper, but yielded nevertheless.

Once in extreme exasperation he had told his wife. "For goodness" sake, get hold of some god or deity like that Chakravarty wife. It's too much for me to withstand your attentions all by myself. Sharing them with a god would make it easier. The gods can stand excesses, but man is frail."

"Indeed!" retorted Sarmila. "Have you forgotten your condition that time when I went to Hardwar with my uncle?"

He had himself related to his wife, adding embellishment for effect, how very pathetic his condition had been in her absence. He knew that such exaggeration would make her feel at once penitent and happy. How could he now go back on his own immoderate version! And so he swallowed the retort and kept quiet. Nor did it end there. Fancying that in the morning he had a slight touch of cold, she made him swallow ten grains of quinine. as well, with juice of *tulsi* leaves in tea. He dared not object, for, having refused to take quinine on a previous occasion, he had developed fever-which incident had remained ineffaceably engraved in the domestic annals.

As she was solicitous of her husband's well-being and comfort at home, so was Sarmila jealously mindful of his dignity abroad. Let me recall an incident.

Once they were going to Nainital on holiday and had their compartment reserved "through". At a junction where they changed trains, they went out to dine. Returning they found a villainous looking figure in livery actively occupied in dispossessing them of their berths. The station-master came and explained that the compartment had been actually reserved for a certain celebrated general, though through inadvertence their naive had been affixed to it. Opening his eyes wide,flabbergasted, Sasanka made ready to shift, when up jumped Sarmila into the compartment and standing against the door challenged:

"Let me see who dares pull me down! Call your General here!"

Sasanka, who was a government servant, and was well

accustomed to keeping a safe distancefrom the path of the superior official tribe, grew nervous and began to protest: "But what's the use? There are plenty of other carriages-"

But Sarmila would not heed. In the end the General who had returned from the refreshment room, cigar in mouth, and was witnessing this spectacle of feminine wrath, himself retired to another compartment. Sasanka turned to his wife: "Do you know how big that man is?"

"Don't care to know. In a compartment reserved for us, he is no bigger than you."

"What if he had insulted us?" ventured Sasanka

"What are you for then?" retorted Sarmila.

Sasanka was a graduate of the Sibpur Engineering College. However irresponsible he might be in the other walks of his life, he was careful enough in his official duties; the main reason being that the planet presiding over his official world was not his wife but the ruthless eye of the "Bara Sahib".

When he was acting as the district engineer his newly won promotion was suddenly reversed and he was superseded, despite his superior claim, by an inexperienced English youth, with the mere down of a moustache-an unsuspected proof of what right connections in high quarters can achieve. Sasanka knew that he would still have to carry on the real work, while that white booby would be installed in the chair. The big boss patted him on the back and said consolingly:

"Very sorry, Mazumdar. As soon as feasible, we'll push you up."

Both of them were Freemasons.

But despite this hope and consolation, the whole affair was exceedingly unpleasant for Mazumdar. At home he found cause for quarrel with every little thing. Suddenly he noticed soot in a corner of his office room; suddenly he felt that he couldn't bear the sight of the green cover of his sofa. He thundered at the office-boy who was sweeping the verandah for blowing dust in his direction. The inevitable specks of dust blew daily, but the master's thunder was something new.

He kept the news of his humiliation from his wife, afraid she would only add one more complication, to the already complicated affairs of his service. She might even go and pick a quarrel with his boss; in no pleasant language, specially as she already nursed a grudge against Donaldson. Once, while engaged in suppressing the monkey pest in the garden of the circuit house, he had instead marked holes in Sasanka's sola hat. Fortunately there was no accident; but an accident there might easily have been. People blamed Sasanka, which only added to Sarmila's wrath against Donaldson. What inflamed her wrath most was that Sasanka's enemies made much of the joke that a bullet aimed at a monkey had landed on Sasanka.

However, she herself found out all about the reverse in her husband's official status. She had suspected from his manner that somewhere a thorn was pricking. It did not take long to discover the cause. Rejecting the way of 'constitutional agitation', she went straight for 'selfdetermination'. She told her husband:

"Have done with it. Hand in your resignation immediately."

Resignation would no doubt remove the leech of humiliation from his breast. But then there stretched before his mind's eye the rich field of regular monthly income and beyond that the golden prospect of a pension.

In the very year in which Sasankamauli had topped the pinnacle of the M.Sc. degree, his father-in-law, unwilling to delay the auspicious event, married him off to Sarmila. With the wealthy father-in-law's help he passed the engineering course. Seeing his speedy rise in service, Rajaram Babu had felt assured of his son-in-law's steady progress in prosperity. The daughter too never suspected till now that the contrary could happen. Not that any want was actually felt in the house; the ways of her father's house had been maintained here too, the reason being that in the domestic dyarchy all management was in Sarmila's control. She had no child, nor any longer the hope of one. Whatever her husband earned was delivered into her hands to the last copper. If any special need arose he had no alternative but to go and beg from the *Annapurna* of his home. If the demand was unreasonable, it was refused; he accepted the decision, scratching his head. But there was always some other sweet compensation to make up for this disappointment.

"To give up the job," said Sasanka, "matters little to me. It's for your sake that I hesitate. You'll be put to hardship."

"It's a worse hardship to try to swallow injustice which sticks in the throat."

"But," remonstrated Sasanka, "one must work. If I give tip the certain, where shall I go about looking for the uncertain?"

"Where you don't care to look now. You jokingly call your government service your luchi-sthan-beyond the arid wastes of *beluchisthan,* and you are so obsessed with it that you ignore the whole wide world outside it."

"Good Heavens! The whole world is too big for me. Who is going to survey all its highways and byways? Where am I to find a telescope big enough for that?"

"No big telescope is needed. My cousin Mathurdada is a big contractor in Calcutta. If you join him as a partner, we'll manage to make both ends meet."

"It would be an unfair sharing, for the weight on this side of the scale would not be enough. To hobble in such partnership seems too undignified."

"The weight on this side of the scale would be not one whit too light. You know the amount father had deposited in the bank in my namewell, it's there, only bloated with interest. You would not have to feel small before your partner."

"How cart I take that?.That money is yours." Saying which Sasanka got up. There were visitors waiting outside. Sarmila caught hold of his dress and pulled him back into the seat.

"I too am yours," she said. And added: "Full out that

fountain-pen from your pocket, here's the paper, write out your resignation. I can have not peace till I have posted that letter."

"Nor can I have any peace either, it seems." He wrote the letter of resignation.

The very next day Sarmila went to Calcutta and straight to Mathurdada's house. Petulantly she greeted him:

"Not once have you cared to inquire after your sister."

One of her own sex would have retorted: "Nor have you." But the male brain could think of no such retort. Mathurdada admitted his fault:

"Have I even the time to breathe? Sometimes I even forget whether or not I exist. Besides; you two are always on tour."

"I read in the papers," said Sarmila, "that you have secured the contract for building a bridge at Mayurbhanj or Mathuraganj or some such place. I was so delighted that I thought, let me go and congratulate Mathurdada in person."

"Wait a little, *Khuki*. It's not time yet."

The trouble was that liquid capital was needed for which he had offered to enter into partnership with a wealthy Marwari. In the end it turned out that the Marwari's conditions were such that while the Marwari would have all the juice, he would be left only the refuse. So he was trying to back out.

"Impossible," cried Sarmila excitedly. "It can't be allowed. If you needs must enter into partnership, then let it be with us. It would be too bad to let such business slip from your hands. I simply will not allow it, say what you will."

It did not take long to render all this into a written deed Mathurdada's heart too was touched.

The business went ahead. Formerly Sasanka's work lead beer 'service', it limits were well defined. Working under a boss, his responsibility ended with the demand made on it. Now, however, he was his own boss, subject to no will. but his own. The claim of duty and his response to it were now merged in one. The days were no longer woven in a network of work-days and holiday; but became one compact whole. Because he was now free to ignore his responsibility, its hold on his mind became all the more tenacious. If nothing else, he must at least pay back his debt to his wife; after that there would be time enough to set the pace slow and easy. And so in khaki pants, his leather belt fastened tight, wearing thick soled shoes, a sola hat on his head, his sleeves rolled up, a watch strapped to his left wrist, and sun-glasses to protect his eyes, Sasanka plunged

headlong into his work. Nor was the pressure of the steam relaxed, even when the debt had been wellnigh liquidated; the mind was still in full heat.

Formerly his income. and expenditure had flowed through one single channel; now they branched into two, one flowing bankwards, the other homewards. Sarmila continued to receive her old portion and dispensed it as before, Sasanka remaining a stranger to its mysteries. On the other hand, Sasanka's leather-bound ledger of business accounts was to her inaccessible, incomprehensible. There was no harm in that. But the fact that this path of her husband's business life ran outside her domestic orbit did, however, mean that her jurisdiction to that extent had suffered.

"Don't overdo it please," she pleaded, "your health will break down."

To no avail. Strangely enough, his health did not break down. Impetuously ignoring all pleadings of conjugal solicitude, her anxiety for his health, her complaints at his lack of rest, her fussy concern over the details of his comfort, et cetera, Sasanka left the house early in the morning, blowing the horn of his second-hand Ford, himself at the wheel; returned at about two or half-past two, received a scolding and then his food which he gulped down.

One day his car ran into another. He was unhurt, but the car was damaged and had to be sent to the garage for repairs. Sarm ila was greatly upset.

"You must not drive any more," she beseeched, her voice hoarse.

"An accident at another's hands can be equally fatal," replied Sasanka, laughingly dismissing her concern.

One day, while he was supervising some repair work, a packingbox nail *pierced* through the shoe right into his foot. At the hospital the wound was bandaged and he was given an antitetanus injection. That day Sarmila was all tears.

"Stay in bed for a day or two at least," she pleaded. But Sasanka replied laconically: "Work."

It is not possible to improve on such brevity of expression.

"But," remonstrated Sarmila,-but Sasanka had left, without even a word, and with bandage on.

Sarmila dared not test her powers any more. The man's masterfulness in his own field was now evident. Beyond all argument, entreaty, pleading, was the one phrase, "I've work to do."

For no reason Sarmila was uneasy, anxious. The slightest delay in returning home and she thought of an accident to the car. When she saw her husband's face flushed with the sun's heat, she thought it must surely be influenza. Timidly she would suggest the doctor-and immediately stop, seeing the reaction on him. Nowadays she was afraid even to express her anxiety fully and freely.

In no time Sasanka became sun-burnt and dry. His dress, like his leisure, was cut short to tightness; his movements became hurried; his speech abrupt like sparks. To this quick rhythm Sarmila's ministry strove to adjust its motions. Some food must always be kept ready and warn near the stove-for who knew when the husband might suddenly and untimely declare: "I'm off. Shall be late in returning." A provision of soda water and dry food-stuff in a tin was neatly stored in his car; a bottle of eau-de-cologne carefully concealed from view-in case of headache. She looked into them carefully each time the car returned home, only to find that nothing had been used. It was distressing. Every day a clean change of clothes, neatly folded,

was prominently displayed in his bedroom, nevertheless, at least four days in the week he found no time to change. Domestic consultation reduced to the briefest, in the staccato style of an express telegram, had to be carried out in a most casual manner, standing, walking or calling from behind, ",Just a word, dear." The little connection which Sarmila had with his business also came to an end with the repayment of her loan, interest and all. The interest too had been paid to the penny and a formal receipt taken.

"What a pity!" wailed Sarmila. "Even in love men cannot wholly lose themselves. A portion of themselves they needs must set apart for the exercise of their masculine ego."

From his share of the profits Sasanka built a house in Bhowanipore, after his own heart. To astound Sarmila he planned the latest devices of hygiene, comfort and order. Sarmila too was not remiss in allowing herself to be properly astounded. There was the laundry machine installed by the engineer. Sarmila looked at it from this side and that and praised it profusely; but to herself she added: "Nevertheless, the clothes will continue to be sent to the dhobi as they have been till this day. I've known -the donkey carry soiled clothes, but have not known science take its place yet."

Seeing the potato-peeling machine she was all amazement. "Threefourths of the drudgery of cooking potatoes is gone now," she declared. Later on it was rumoured that this machine had earned its liberation from toil in some limbo of oblivion, alongside many a leaking pot and broken kettle.

When the house was completed, Sarmila's repressed affection found a stable object for its exercise. The infinite patience of a brick-and- body makes it a convenient object of affection. The endless pother of setting and fitting, furnishing and arranging drove the two bearers to the end of their tether; one of them gave notice. The interior decoration was for Sasanka's benefit. He hardly ever sat in the drawing room; yet cushions of various patterns were devotedly spread for his tired backbone; tables and teapoys were there, with fringed covers embroidered with flowered patterns; and many a flower-vase. He no longer entered the bedroom during the day, the reason being that in his current calendar Sunday had been adopted as twin-brother of Monday. Even on other holidays when the office was closed he managed to find some little work or other to do and went and sat in his study with his files or with his tracing cloth. Nevertheless, in the bedroom the old order persisted. In front of the spacious, cushioned sofa were the knitted slippers; beside it the *pans* ready as of old in the betel box; on the rack a Punjabi of fine silk and a *dhoti,* pleated and crinkled, ready for wear.

It was a risky business to meddle with Sasanka's study; despite the risk Sarmila ventured in with a duster when he was not there. With unremitting diligence she strove to bring order and harmony in the medley of things useful and useless.

Thus Sarmila continued to be serviceable, but her service went a great deal unobserved. Her devotion which was once offered directly to its object was now directed to its symbols-in looking after the house and the garden, in knitting a cover for Sasanka's sofa, embroidering flower patterns on his pillow-case, in setting on a corner of his officetable bouquets of tuberoses in blue crystal vases. It cost her no little pain to worship her deity from so great a distance. She was still bathing with her secret tears the wound inflicted on her only the other day. It was the 29th of *Kartik*, Sasanka's birthday, the most festive day in her life. And usual, invitations had been sent out to friends and the house and the gate specially decorated with flower and leaf. Returning from work just before noon, Sasanka inquired: "What's the matter? A doll's wedding, I supposel"

"Dear me! You have even forgotten it's your birthday today. But say what you will, you must stay in this evening."

"Business bends its head before no day, save the day of death."

"I won't ever ask you again, but today I have already sent out the invitations."

"Look here, Sarmila, don't you ever try to set me up as a plaything and call in the crowd to watch you play."

Saying which Sasanka hurriedly left. Shutting the bedroom door Sarmila cried awhile.

In the afternoon the guests arrived. They readily acknowledged the paramount claim of 'business'. Had it been Kalidasa's birthday instead, the plea that he had to finish the third Act of *Sakuntala* would have been dismissed by them as too frivolous to be seriously entertained as an excuse for his absence. But business! However, there was enough of amusement and gaiety. Nalu Babu made everyone laugh by his caricatures of the current stage-acting; even Sarmila joined in the hilarity. Sasanka's birthday, bereft of Sasanka, prostrated itself before the business presided over by him. Even Sarmila's heart, aggrieved as it was, made its distant obeisance to the flying banner on the racing chariot of that business.

Unbending was this work, which cared for none, which ignored everything, the wife's entreaties, the invitations to friend-,' his own comfort even. Such faith in his work gives man faith in himself; it is the homage of self to its own power. Standing on one bank of their river-the bank of daily domestic routine-Sarmila watched with awe Sasanka's work on the other bank which made itself felt far and wide, beyond the boundaries of the household, in distant lands, on the shores of distant seas, gathering in the net of its authority men both known and unknown.

Man is at daily war with his fate; if the soft entwining arms of woman hinder him in his rugged onward march, it is but natural that he should ruthlessly break away. With loving faith Sarmila had accepted this ruthlessness. But there were times when she could not help herself, and impelled by love, her tender solicitude trespassed on forbidden ground. Rebutted; she acknowledged the rebuff as well-merited and sorrowfully retraced her steps, praying to the Deity to watch her husband's steps where access to her was barred.

Nirad

WHEN the prosperity of this family, riding on bank investments, was running into six figures, Sarmila was attacked and laid prostrate by a disease which could not be diagnosed. It is necessary to explain why this fact caused so much consternation.

Sarmila's father, Rajaram Babu, had owned a considerable estate in Barisal, near the mouth of the Ganges, besides holding shares in a shipbuilding yard at Salimar. He was born at the junction of the old times and the new. He could wrestle, hunt, wield a lathi like an expert, and was also famous for his skill at *pakhwaj*. He could recite from memory passages from *The Merchant of Venice,Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* held Macaulay's English as his ideal, and was an ardent admirer of Burke's orations. His appreciation of Bengali literature extended as far as *Meghnadbadh Kabya*. In his middle age he had looked upon the taking of alcoholic drinks and proscribed food as a *sine qua non* of modern culture. In his old age, however, he gave it up. Handsome and dignified in appearance, of tall and sturdy build, he dressed with meticulous care, and was of a hearty and sociable disposition. He never could say 'No" to needy importunity: Though he himself was indifferent to religious forms, they were nevertheless observed in his house with great pomp, for such impressive observances add to the prestige of the family. As regards the actual worship of the deity there were the ladies of the house and many others to look after it. Had he been keen, he could easily have secured the tide of a Raja for himself. If any one asked him why he was indifferent to it, Rajaram laughingly replied that his father having already conferred on him the name Raja, it would be belittling that honour to add a duplicate to it. At the Government House he was honoured with entry by the special gate. on the occasion of the customary *Jagadhatri Puja* in his house, champagne used to flow freely and high English officials had their fill of it.

After Sarmila's marriage, his widowed home was left with only his eldest son Hemanta and his youngest daughter Urmimala "Brilliant!"- is how the teachers had always spoken of the boy. His appearance was such that when one had passed him one turned to look at him again. There was no subject in which he did not secure the highest marks at every examination. In athletic achievements too he promised to live up to his father's reputation. It is superfluous to state that he was constantly besieged by eager agents of prospective brides, but he was averse to marriage as yet. For the present his heart was bent on the prospect of a degree at a European University, with which object he had even begun to study French and German. Meanwhile, for want of anything better, he began the study of law as well, though there was hardly any necessity for it.

About this time, however, Hemanta was suddenly attacked by a disease, whether of the intestines or of some other organ, the doctors failed to diagnose. The mysterious ailment was lodged in his robust body as in a citadel; it was as difficult to locate it as to attack it. Rajaram Babu had implicit faith in an English doctor, who enjoyed at that time high reputation as a surgeon. The surgeon began an exploration of his patient's body and, as is the way of surgeons, came to the conclusion that the trouble was rooted in some inaccessible organ which must therefore be uprooted. But when, accordingly, his skilful instruments cut open the outer layer of the flesh and exposed the interior, neither the alleged enemy nor any trace of its havoc was discovered. The mischief was irremediable and the boy died. The father was disconsolate with bitter grief. It was not the death so much as the picture of a strong, beautiful and palpitating body being mutilated which, like a black bird of prey, dug its piercing claws into his mind, and sucking his vitals day and night, brought him to the very verge of death.

Dr. Nirad Mukherjee, an old class-mate of Hemanta's, who had recently qualified as a doctor and was helping in the nursing of his friend, had protested from the very beginning that the case was being wrongly treated. He had given his own diagnosis and had advised a change of climate and a long stay in some dry place. But the prejudices of an older generation were too firmly fixed in the mind of Rajaram, who believed that only an English doctor could effectively combat the fierce onslaught of death. But after this experience his affection for Nirad and confidence in him rose disproportionately high. His young daughter Urmi too suddenly realized that here was a man of uncommon genius and said to her father:

"So young in years, father, and yet how strong his confidence in himself! See, how boldly and without any hesitation or doubt he asserted his judgment even against that of such a big and hefty foreign doctor!"

The father replied: "A doctor does not learn from books alone. Some are endowed with a rare, God-given insight-which I find Nirad has."

Thus under the impact of sorrow and in the pain of remorse, a slight proof of merit was sufficient to give rise to their loving admiration which, once born, went on growing without waiting for any further evidence of worth.

One day Rajaram called his daughter and said:

"Urmi, I almost hear Hemantha calling to me- calling upon me to alleviate the suffering of diseased humanity. I have decided to found a hospital in his name." degree at a European University, with which object he had even begun to study French and German. Meanwhile, for want of anything better, he began the study of law as well, though there was hardly any necessity for it.

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"Excellent!" exclaimed Urmi exultingly, carried away by her natural enthusiasm. "Send me to Europe. Let me return as a doctor and take charge of the hospital."

The suggestion appealed to Rajaram. "This hospital will be a *Debottar* property," he said, "and you shall be the *Shebait.* Great pain was Hemanta's portion; he loved you much; your devoted service will bring him peace in the other world. You served him day and night on his sick bed; now that service will attain a larger scope in your hands."

It did not strike him as preposterous that a girl of aristocratic family should take to medicine as a profession; for he had now deeply realized what it meant to rescue life from the clutches of disease. His own son could not survive, but the sons of others might; which would be some compensation for his loss, some lightening of the weight of his sorrow. He said to his daughter:

"Finish your science course at the University here, and then proceed to Europe."

From now on, one thought constantly recurred to Rajaram's mind, the thought of that boy Nirad. A veritable piece of gold. The more he saw him, the more he liked him. Having covered the tedious course of examinations, how smoothly he was swimming his way through the deep ocean of medical knowledge! Despite his young years, he was unmoved by the pleasures of light-hearted gaiety, deeply absorbed in the latest discoveries, discussing them, analysing them and putting them to the test, even at the risk of his professional career. He had great contempt for those who had only built up a practice, and would say: "The foolish achieve success, the worthy glory." An epigram taken from a book.

At last Rajaram told Urmi one day: "I've been thinking that it would be best for the success of the mission if you and Nirad join hands in this work. I too would feel reassured. It's rare to come across a boy like that."

Whatever else Rajaram could do, he could not be indifferent to Hemanta's opinions; and Hemanta used to say that it was barbarous of parents to ignore the daughter's wishes in the matter and to force on her a marriage of their own choice. Rajaram had once argued that marriage was not a mere personal affair but involved the whole family, and that therefore in its making not only desire but experience also should count. But argue as he might, and despite his own likes and dislikes, so great was his affection for Hemanta that in this family it was really the latter's will that prevailed.

Nirad Mukherjee had always been a frequent visitor. Hemanta had nicknamed him the Owl When invited to explain the significance, Hemanta used to say: "This man is mythological; he has no age, only learning; hence I call him Minerva's mount." Nirad was a frequent guest at their tea-table, where he would often enter into a terrific argument with Hemanta. No doubt, Urmi was in his mind; if his behaviour gave no indication of the fact, it was because his nature had not fitted him for the ways appropriate to such expression. He could discuss, but could not converse. Even if the heat of youth was in him, he was without its glow. Hence he took a particular delight in running down those in whom the exuberance of youth was self-evident. Naturally, therefore, no one had reckoned him as a suitor for Urmi's hand, though now it so happened that this very apparent indifference raised Urmi's respect for him to the point of veneration.

When Rajaram had made it quite clear that, provided his daughter had no objection, it would make him happy to see her wedded to Nirad, Urmi signified her consent by a nod of her head; only adding that the wedding would have to wait till she had completed her course of education, both here and in Europe.

"That's as it should be," replied the father, "as long as the engagement is accepted and made definite by both the parties."

It did not take long to get Nirad's consent, though his manner implied that for a scientist marriage was a kind of self-abnegation, almost amounting to suicide. Perhaps as a partial alleviation of this calamity, he made it a condition that in education as in other matters Urmi would be guided entirely by him, so that he might gradually mould and fashion her as his future wife. This training would be scientific, rigidly prescribed and regulated, infallible as a laboratory process.

"The birds and beasts," explained Nirad to Urmi "come out readymade from Nature"s workshop. But human life is in a raw, unformed state. It's for man to put it into shape."

Urmi gently replied: "You may by all means experiment. I'll make no difficulties."

"The life-force in you is dispersed," went on Nirad. "It has to be mobilized and marshalled round one single object of your life. Then will your life gain a meaning. When that which is scattered is gathered and concentrated towards a single aim and becomes intense and dynamic, then alone can we call it a moral organism."

Urmi was thrilled. So many young men frequented their tea-table and their tennis court, but not one ever said anything thought-provoking or did anything but yawn, if some one else happened to say it.

Indeed, Nirad did have a way of imparting the utmost profoundity to anything he uttered. In whatever he said Urmi discovered a wonderful depth of meaning. Amazingly intellectual!

Rajaram would often invite his elder son-in-law to his house and tried to encourage intimacy between the two sons-in-law.

"What an insufferably cheeky blighted" remarked Sasanka to Sarmila. "He thinks we are all his pupils- and that too at the very bottom of the very lowest Form."

"That is your jealousy," replied Sarmila laughing. "Why, I rather like him."

"Why not change places with your younger sister?" asked Sasanka.

"That might mean a great relief to you," replied Sarmila, "but to me-it is different."

Nirad too did not seem to feel any particularly brotherly regard for Sasanka. "A mason-not a scientist!" he said to himself. "He has handsbut what of the brain?"

Sasanka would often chaff his sister-in-law about Nirad.

"It is time you changed your name."

"In the English manner?"

"No, in the pure Sanskrit way."

"Let's hear the new name."

Vidyut-lata. Nirad will like it. He is familiar with this thing in his laboratory. Now he will have it harnessed at home."

To himself he said: 'Indeed, the name does suit her.' A secret pang pricked him. 'Pity that such a girl should fall into the hands of so great a prig.' In whose hands it would have consoled and pleased Sasanka to see her fall, it is hard to say.

Shortly after, Rajaram died. The future rightful master of Urmi now wholeheartedly took upon himself the responsibility of guiding her mind to its full maturity.

Good-looking as Urmimala was, she seemed even better looking than she was; the luminous intensity of her mind scintillated in the lively movements of her body. She was eager about everything: interested in science, even more so in literature; greatly excited at the prospect of witnessing a football match on the maidan; not indifferent to the cinema; must be present when the physicist from Europe lectured at the Presidency College; listened-in to the radio and though she might now and again ejaculate an ugh! was nevertheless interested; ran out to the verandah to watch a wedding party pass by, with its bride-groom and the fanfare of trumpets; was a frequent visitor to the Zoo which she enjoyed greatly, specially when she stood watching the monkeys in their cage; would accompany her father and sit by his side when he went angling; played tennis; was particularly good at badminton. All these interests she had derived from her brother. Slender and delicate as a frail creeper, she swayed with every breath of the wind. She dressed simply but elegantly; knew how to bring out the full beauty of the figure in a sari by a slight turn here, a right twist there, a little tightening here and a little loosening there-in a way whose secret no one could catch. Though she could not sing well, she could play on the sitar. When she played, it was difficult to say whether it was a thing to hear or a sight to see-it seemed as though her wild unruly fingers were in an uproar. She was never in want of a topic for conversation, never waited for a proper excuse for laughter. She had an inexhaustible talent for creating company out of dullness and filling emptiness with her mere presence. Only in Nirad's presence she became an altogether different person, as though the wind had left the sail and the boat had to be slowly and-gently towed.

Every one said that Urmi's nature was like her brother's, full of vitality and liveliness. Urmi knew that it was her brother who had released the current of her mind. Hemanta used to say: "Our homes are like moulds for fashioning human beings of clay, which is why the foreign juggler has succeeded so long in keeping thirty-three crores of puppets dancing to his tune. When the time comes, I'll break into this puppet- and wreak the havoc of a Kalapahar." The time never came-but he left Urmi's mind very living indeed.

What caused all the trouble was the extreme rigidity of Nirad's method of work. He prescribed a course of study for her, and admonished her thus: "Look here, Urmi, if you let your mind spill over in its onward march, what will be left in your pitcher at the end of the journey?" He added: "You are like a butterfly, restlessly flitting about without gathering, anything. You should be like a bee. Every moment is of account. Life is not dalliance."

Of late Nirad had been studying books on Pedagogy borrowed from the Imperial Library. All these maxims were to be found in them. His very language was of the books, for he did not know how to put things in simple and natural words of his own. Urmi was left in no doubt that she was at fault. Great was her mission and yet every now and then her mind wandered away from it, leaving her in a state of perpetual self-reproof. Before her was the example of Nirad. How amazingly steadfast, how single-minded of purpose! flow sternly he had set his face

against all fun and frivolity! If any work of fiction or light literature caught his eye on Urmi's table, it was immediately forfeited. One day when he came to pay his supervisory call, he learnt that she had gone to spend the evening at an English theatre to see Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado. She had never missed such chances while her brother lived. She was severely taken to task by Nirad. He spoke in English in a tone of the utmost gravity:

"Have you already begun to forget that you have dedicated your life to the mission of making your brother's death-fruitful in service?"

The words stung Urmi with extreme remorse. She said to herself: "What an uncommon power of seeing through the mind this person has! Indeed, it does seem that my grief is losing its intensity-I myself couldn't realize it. Shame on this fickleness in my character!"

She began a strict watch on herself, removing every trace of attractiveness from her dress. The sari was now coarse, its colour all gone. The chocolates were still in the drawer, but the desire for them was gone. She leashed her unchained mind to the dry post of duty within a severely restricted orbit. Her elder sister scolded her; as for Sasanka, the bitter epithets he showered on Nirad were too strong and too foreign to be found in the dictionary-they were not exactly pleasant to hear.

Sasanka and Nirad had one thing in common: both took to EnglishSasanka when in a furiously abusive temper, and Nirad when he was discoursing on something profound. Nirad disliked it most when Urmi was invited to her sister's house. It was not that she merely went-she was most eager to go. This intimacy of blood relationship seemed to cut through his own rights over her.

One day with a grave countenance he said to Urmi:

"Please don't mind the unpleasant words which my sense of responsibility towards you obliges me to say. I must warn you that this intimacy is injurious to the development of your character. Family attachment makes you blind-but I can see quite clearly the likelihood of degradation."

The first mortgage deed of the thing called Urmi's character being in Nirad's strong box, the loss would naturally be his if anything happened to that character. As a result of Nirad's ban, Urmi, on various pretexts, made her visits to Bhowanipore very rare. This imposition of restraint on herself she regarded as a sort of repayment of her huge debt. For, what sacrifice could be greater for a votary of science than that which Nirad had made by encumbering his work for his own ideal with this life-long charge of her life?

Though in a sense Urmi had got used to the unhappy strain of withholding herself from every enjoyment, now and again her mind was seized with a painful yearning which she could not wholly suppress as a mere frivolity. Nirad merely directed her-why did he never for a moment woo her? For such an expression of ardour on his part her heart ever waited, and for want of it, remained unfulfilled; her very acts of duty became dry and lifeless. Sometimes when she suddenly caught a look of wistfulness in Nirad's eyes, it seemed to her that the deep secret of his heart would now be laid bare. But, Cod knows, even if deep yearning was in him anywhere, its language was not known to him. And because he could not express himself, he found fault with the urge for selfexpression and prided himself on the very dumbness of his agitated heart, which he thought was but a proof of his strength of character. "Sentimentality is not in my grain," he declared. On such occasions Urmi felt like crying, but so hypnotised was she by her own devotion that she too thought that this indeed was manliness. And then she would begin again ruthlessly chastising her 'weak' mind. But try as she might, she could not get away from the consciousness that the spontaneous readiness with which, under the impact of great sorrow, she had at first undertaken her arduous mission had steadily flagged until now it had to cling for support to another's will.

Nirad put it quite plainly to her: "You had better understand, Urmi,` that it is no good expecting from me the kind of adulation which girls commonly hope for from men. What I give you is something far more true and valuable than all their made-up pretty talk."

With bent head Urmi silently wondered: "Can't anything ever remain hidden from him?"

She is unable to fix her mind on anything. On the roof-terrace she paces about alone. The afternoon fades into dusk. Across the uneven heights of the city mansions, the sun sinks to its rest beyond the distant masts of ships on the Ganges. The clouds with their many-coloured bars raise barricades at the day's frontier. Gradually the barricades fade out of sight.

The moon climbs above the church spire. In the misty light the city looks like a dream, like an enchanted land. She wonders, is life really so uncompromisingly severe? Can it be so niggardly as to allow no holiday, no gift of joy? And then a maddening impulse seizes her, a desire to do something wicked, to shout at the top of her voice, 'I don't care!'

Urmimala

NIRAD finished the piece of research he had taken in hand, and sent the thesis to a scientific association in Europe. It brought him recognition as well as a scholarship. He made up his mind to cross the seas for a degree at a European university.

The moment of parting was not marked by any tender words. He merely kept on repeating "Now that I am leaving, I am afraid you will slacken in your efforts."

"Have no fear," replied Urmi.

"I am leaving detailed instructions in writing," said Nirad, "to guide your future conduct and studies."

"I shall follow them faithfully."

"I'll remove these books from your almirah," went on Nirad, "and leave them locked up in my house."

"You may take them," said Urmi handing him the key.

He glanced once at her sitar but hesitated and said nothing. But he felt obliged by his sense of responsibility to utter the last admonition.

"My only fear is that if you start once more frequenting Sasanka Babu's house your steadiness will again falter. There's no doubt of it. Please don't imagine that I am out to malign Sasanka Babu. He is an excellent man. I've seen very few Bengalis with his zeal and aptitude for business. His only drawback is that he acknowledges no ideals. To tell you the truth, at times I feel very apprehensive about him."

This led to further elaboration of Sasanka's many drawbacks. Nirad could not help giving vent to his grave concern at the several other shortcomings in Sasanka's character which, though dormant then, were bound to become more active with age. But that, nevertheless, he was an excellent man, Nirad was anxious vociferously to admit, adding in the same breath that it was imperative for Urmi to guard herself against his house. It would be a sure degradation for Urmi if her Mind ever came down to their level.

"But why are you so apprehensive?" asked Urmi. "Shall I tell you whys You won't resent it?" "You have taught me to bear the truth. I will stand it though I know it won't be easy."

"Then listen. I've observed a sort of likeness between your temperament and Sasanka Babu's. It's this very light-heartedness of his that appeals to you, isn't it?"

'Is this man omniscient?' Urmi wondered. Undoubtedly she liked

her brother-in-law very much- and mainly for his capacity for rollicking laughter, his pleasantries and his waggish pranks. Then also he knew just what flower Urmi loved best and what colour pleased her most in a sari.

"Yes, that's true, I like it," she admitted. "Sarmila-didi's love," proceeded Nirad, "is serene and deep; her care and devotion are like an act of religious merit; her duty knows no holiday. It's by virtue of these that Sasanka Babu is enabled to give his whole mind to his work. But the day you go to Bhowanipore the mask falls off his face-there he is with his tomfooleries, pulling out your hair-pins and letting loose your coiffure, snatching your book and hiding it on the almirah-top. His interest in tennis suddenly becomes overwhelming despite other engagements."

Urmi could not help admitting to herself that it was this very naughtiness of Sasankada's which drew her to him. Her own irresponsible girlishness surged up in her when she was with him, and he too was no less a victim of her pranks. Her Didi would smile her gentle, serene smile at their wild frolics. Sometimes she would mildly chide, though the chiding was but a pretence.

"You should stick only to that," said Nirad, winding up, "which gives the least scope to your own nature. There was little fear so long as I was there, for my nature is the exact contrary of yours. While I was your guardian it was impossible that any of my acts should ever vitiate your. mind."

"I'll always bear in mind what you have said," said Urmi, her head bent low.

"I am leaving behind some books for you," said Nirad. "Read specially the chapters I have marked. You will find them useful."

Urmi needed this tutoring. Of late she had been assailed by doubts that perhaps she had been misled by the first fervour of her enthusiasm in selecting medicine as her line, that perhaps she had no aptitude for it. The books marked by Nirad would act like a rope tied to her, towing her upstream.

After Nirad's departure Urmi subjected herself to even harder severities. Except that she went to college, she practically shut herself up as if in a zenana. Returning home at the end of the day, she would again ruthlessly chain her mind to study, however much the tired mind yearned for rest. She made no progress whatsoever, her listless wandering mind vainly lingering over the same page. But she would nut admit defeat. Because Nirad was not there, his will from its distance began to work all the more effectively on her.

She particularly despised herself when in the midst of work she was haunted by memories of the past. Many were tier admirers among the young men; to some she had been indifferent, towards some she had felt drawn. Though in no case had it yet matured into love, the longing to love, like the sweet and gentle breeze of spring, played about her mind; so that now she would be humming a tune all by herself, now copying a poem that had caught her fancy, now playing on the sitar, if the mind were stirred a little too deeply. Nowadays it was not uncommon that as she sat in the evening, her eyes fixed on the pages of her book, she was suddenly startled to discover that her mind was haunted by the memory of a face and of a day which had moved her but little at the rime. Sometimes the face would be of one whose persistent wooing had actually irritated her, though today that very memory seemed to stir in her mind a pang of discontent, as the light, fleeting wings of the butterfly leave on the flower a touch of spring.

The more fiercely she tried to fling these thoughts away from her mind, the more surely they boomeranged back into it. She had placed a photograph of Nirad on her desk at which she would look long and steadily. The light of intellect was in that face, but no trace or the heart's ardour. If that face did not call, to what was her spirit to respond? All she could do was to work up her mind into a state of exalted contemplation of his genius, his heroic striving, his unblemished character and her own undreamt-of good fortune.

We might as well state here that in one respect Nirad had triumphed. At the time of his engagement to Urmi, Sasanka, as well as several other skeptics, had laughed and had mockingly declared: "The simple-minded Rajaram Babu has convinced himself that Nirad is an idealist. An idealist indeed! No pious platitudes can hide the fact that his idealism is secretly worming its way into Urmi's purse. True he has 'sacrificed' himselfbut to the deity enthroned in the imperial Bank. Where we would plainly and bluntly tell our father-in-law that we need money, which won't be wasted but will on the contrary be used for his daughter's benefit, this great man condescends to marry only for the sake of a great mission! And then he will daily translate that mission into figures in his father-in- cheque book."

Knowing that such comments were inevitable, Nirad had told Urmi that the one condition of his marriage was that he would not touch a penny of her money, but would depend entirely on his own earnings. When the would-be father-in-law proposed to send him to Europe, Nirad did not agree, even though it meant that he would have to wait long. He had moreover told Rajaram Babu: "Whatever money you choose to donate for the founding of the hospital should be put down in the name of your daughter. When I take charge of the hospital I'll draw no remuneration for my work. 1 am a doctor. I don't have to worry about my livelihood."

Such extreme disinterestedness only confirmed Rajaram Babu's love and admiration for Nirad and gave Urmi cause- for much pride. On the other hand, the fact that this pride had a legitimate cause turned Sarmila's mind against Nirad. 'Pshaw! Let's see how long these heroics last!' Henceforth whenever Nirad was in the midst of one of his usual, profound discourses, Sarmila would suddenly get up and walk out of the room, her head mockingly cocked sideways, her steps audible from a considerable distance. For Urmi's sake she said nothing but her silence by its very irony was withering enough.

At first every mail brought from Nirad four or five pages of longwinded counsel. After some time, however, there came a startling telegram, demanding a considerable sum of money, urgently needed for his study. Though. the pride which Urmi had cherished as her supreme treasure received a blow, the telegram was also in a way secretly comforting. For as the days passed and Nirad's absence was prolonged, her original nature had begun to seek ways of escape from the barricade of duty she had erected round it. Under various pretexts she would deceive herself and then reproach herself. Nirad's appeal for money therefore came as a consolation to her contrite mind.

Handing the telegram to the estate-manager, Urmi said hesitatingly, "Kaka-babu, the money-"

"I can't make out what it means," said the manager. "All along we have been under the impression that your money was unacceptable to him." The manager did not like Nirad.

"But in a foreign land-" Urmi faltered, unable to finish the sentence.

"That the foreign soil can change our native character, 1 know well enough," said Kaka-babu. "But how are we going to keep pace with such changes?"

"But he might be landed in difficulties if the money is not sent to him," protested Urmi.

"Very well then, I'll send it. Don't be anxious. But mark my words, this is only the beginning, not the end of it."

That this was not the end was speedily proved when another call arrived for a still bigger sum-this time for reasons of health.

"I had better consult Sasanka Babu," said the manager, looking grave.

"Please, do not let Didi and others come to know of it," pleaded Urmi gready flustered.

"I don't like to take all the responsibility on my shoulders."

"But all this money will in any case be his one day."

"Before that we must see to it that it is not thrown away."

"But we must also consider his health."

"Ill-health is of various sorts. Exactly what he is suffering from is not known. May be, if he returned here the change of climate would restore him to health. We might arrange his passage back."

The proposal to get Nirad back greatly perturbed Urmi. She attributed it to her concern for his studies.

The Kaka was saying: "Well, let the money be sent this time,though I fear it will only aggravate the doctor's malady."

Radhagovinda was a near relation of Urmi's. The innuendo in his words stirred a faint breath of suspicion in her mind. "May be, it's better to let Didi know" On the other hand the question kept recurring to her, poking her:

"Why don't I feel dejected-as I should?"

About this time Sarmila's disease had begun to cause anxiety, the tragedy of her brother's case adding alarm to anxiety. A number of doctors were set on the trail of its mysterious source. Smiling her wearied smile, Sarmila remarked: "The culprit will elude the C.I.D, only the innocent will be harassed to death."

"Let the Inspectors carry on their legitimate investigation-but third degree methods, no, never!" Sasanka assured her.

Sasanka had two heavy contracts on hand, one with a jute mill on the Ganges' bank, the other at Tollygunge in the garden house of the Mirpur Zamindar. The workers' tenements at the

jute mill which had to be completed within three months, besides the several tube-wells in different localities he had taken in hand, left him no time to spare. Between the pressure of his work and the frequent claims of Sarmila's illness on his time, he was in a state of constant anxiety.

In the many years of their married life lie had never had to worry on account of his wife's health, with the result that this time the strain of her illness drove him into a state of almost childish flurry. Leaving his work unattended he would return home and sit helplessly by her side. Gently caressing her hair he would inquire how she felt that day.

"I'm ail right," Sarmila would promptly answer. "Please don't worry unnecessarily."

Encouraged by his own wishful thinking, Sasanka believed the obviously unbelievable and felt greatly relieved.

"I've been entrusted with a huge contract by the Raja of Dhenkanal, and have to discuss the plan with the Dewan. I'll return at the earliest before the doctor comes."

"I beg of you," pleaded Sarmila anxiously, "don't let unnecessary hurry spoil your work. Don't I understand that your presence is needed there! Of course, you must go. If you don't, I'll only get worse. There are enough people to attend to me."

To build up a magnificent fortune had become Sasanka's obsession day and night. It was not wealth but the magnificence of it which drew him on. Man is made that way; he responds to the call of glory. One may despise wealth only when it barely and meagrely suffices; but the moment its summit is raised high, men flock to admire it. Not that they are any the better for it, but because they delight in watching the splendour of eminence. As Sasanka sat by his wife's side, his uneasy mind could not help apprehending where lay a possible obstacle to his career of achievement. Sarmila knew that this apprehension in her husband's mind was not due to any miserly greed but was rooted in a manly ambition to build up from the very bottom a tower of triumph. Considering his glory as her own, she did not like him to neglect his work in order to attend to her, however pleasing such attentions in themselves. She therefore constantly urged him to return to his duty.

Her own duties caused her endless anxiety. Now that she was laid up in bed, who knew what mess the servants were making-not doubt using bad ghee in cooking, neglecting to keep hot water in the bath at the appointed hour or to change the bed linen in dine; no one to see if the drains had been properly cleaned. Well she knew what confusion it meant if the clothes from the washer-man were not properly received and checked. Unable to bear the strain she would secretly leave her bed to see things for herself. The pain would increase, the temperature shoot up, and the doctor would be puzzled.

At last she sent for her sister Urmimala. "Never mind your college for a few days-come to the rescue of my household, otherwise I can't even die in peace."

Those who have read the story so far will at this stage smile knowingly and declare, "We know the rest." Indeed, it does not need much intelligence to anticipate. What must happen does happen, and no more need happen. Nor is it necessary to imagine that in the game of life Fortune will necessarily keep back her cards, throwing dust into Sarmila's eyes.

Urmi was enthusiastic at this opportunity of serving her sister and was ready, since there was no alternative, to set aside all other tasks. Moreover, so she argued, nursing a patient was quite in line with her future medical career. She got ready a leather-bound book of charts for recording graphically the daily variations of disease. She also made up her mind to read up from books all she could gather about her sister,s illness, lest the attending physician look down upon her for her ignorance. Physiology being her subject in M Sc., she would have no difficulty in following the therapeutic terminology. In short, having convinced herself that attending on her sister would mean no snapping of the thread of duty but would rather help her to pursue it the more arduously and steadfastly, she packed all her books and papers in a bag and presented herself at the Bhowanipore residence. She did not have to pore over the bulky medical manuals, for not even the specialists were able to diagnose the disease.

Imagining herself as the sole warden of the sick room, she very gravely announced to her sister: "Since I am here to see that the doctor's instructions are strictly carried out, you will have to listen to whatever I say."

Amused at the elaborate earnestness other attitude, Sarmila replied, smiling: "Indeed, what teacher has coached you in such earnestnessthis fanaticism of a new convert[7] As a matter of fact, I have called you here only because I must have some one to carry out my instructions. Your hospital is not yet ready, but my household is in full swing; so meanwhile take charge of it so that your Didi may have some relief."

And so she was relieved of her duty in the sick room at her Didi's own insistence.

Now Urmi became the vicegerent in the kingdom other sister's household. Things were in chaos there and needed immediate measures. In the scheme of this household every activity of each member, high and low, was directed and subordinated to one great purpose, namely the comfort and convenience of the gentleman who presided over it. That this gentleman' was utterly helpless and pathetically incapable of looking after his own physical needs-this impression was too firmly rooted in Sarmila's mind to be ever dislodged. When she found that he had not even noticed the hole which his cigar had burnt in his sleeve, she was not a little amused, but was at the same time filled with a great tenderness. The engineer would bustle off in the morning to his duty in such a great hurry as to forget to turn the tap off after his wash, only to find on his return the bed-room floor one sheet of water and the carpet in a mess. At the very outset when the tap was being installed, Sarmila had objected, knowing that a tap so near the bed would only result in his hands in a daily recurrence of an all-round

mess in the room. But the great engineer must set up every sort of complicated nuisance in the name of scientific amenities. Once in a fit of originality he had contrived an entirely original model of a stove, with shutters and funnels on all sides for conserving heat and for the speedy discharge of ash, and fitted inside with a variety of special devices of cells and shelves for baking, grilling, boiling and what not. If, in the interest of peace and good will, the invention was accorded a warm domestic welcome, the reception was in words and manner only, not in any use made of it. Adult babies have their hobbies, which they forget in a day but which, if resisted, lead only to friction. Bored with the monotony of daily usage, they break into something spectacular, to which women need pay no more than lip-service, while free to do as they choose. This responsibility of husband-tending Sarmila had long enjoyed.

A long time indeed. It was impossible for Sarmila to conceive of Sasanka's world without herself in it. But now she was afraid that the courier of Death would intervene between that world and its presiding goddess. She even feared that after death her bodiless spirit would have no peace if Sasanka's bodily comforts were not well looked after. Fortunately there was Urmi. Though not so gentle as her sister, Urmi could nevertheless carry'on the work, for after all hers was a woman's touch. Without the tender grace of such a touch the daily provision of a man's life is left dry and flavourless, devoid of charm. And so as she watched Urmi's beautiful hands peel and cut an apple, rind and slice an orange, neatly pick out the seeds of a pomegranate and tastefully set everything on a plate of white stone, Sarmila seemed to realize her own self in her sister. A stream of directions would issue ceaselessly from her sick bed:

"Do fill his cigarette case, Urmi."

"Can't you see it won't occur to him to change his soiled kerchief?"

"He won't have the sense to ask the bearer to clean his shoes-see how stiff they look with their coating of cement and sand!'

"Do have the pillow cases changed, dear."

"Put away these paper scraps in the wastepaper basket"

"Do peep into his study, Urmi, I'm sure he has left the key of his cash box on the desk."

"Don't forget it's time to transplant the cauliflower seedlings."

"Please ask the mali to prune the rose plants."

"Look at those daubs of lime on the back of his coat! Do wait a moment, why this hurry? Please, Urmi dear, brush them off."

Though Urmi was used to books rather than to domestic work, she thoroughly enjoyed her new duties. Having broken away from the rigid discipline of her life, these varied ministrations gave her a sense of freedom. The under-current of anxiety and devotion beneath the smooth running of this household was little realized by her, for the strain of its direction was borne by her sister. To Urmi it all seemed a play, a kind of holiday, occupation without an aim. Here was a world in itself, wholly different from her own old world; here no aim, no object to be achieved held up its warning finger before her; and yet the day was full of activity, delightfully varied. She had not to account for each mistake, each shortcoming. If her Didi tried to chide her, ever so mildly, Sasanka would laugh it all away, as though the very shortcomings of Urmi added a special relish to his enjoyment. Indeed, the fact that their little world had now lost its look of earnest responsibility, that in the new atmosphere of laxity, mistake and inadvertence no longer mattered, was to Sasanka a source of great relaxation and amusement. Life seemed a picnic now. The fact that Urmi never seemed worried, never looked miserable, never felt ashamed of little mishaps, but always overflowed with enthusiasm in whatever she did helped considerably to lighten the strain on Sasanka's mind of his own heavy responsibility of work. Nowadays he was always eager to return home as soon as his work was over- sometimes even when the work was not over.

It must be confessed that Urmi was no expert at household management. Nevertheless, it was evident that, if not by virtue of her work, by the charm of her personality she filled a great and longstanding void in this house. What this void was, it is difficult to define in words. And so when Sasanka returned home these days, he experienced the buoyancy of a playful, holiday spirit in the atmosphere. This enjoyment was not of domestic comfort, nor was it merely in the atmosphere. It had a rapturous embodiment. Indeed, it was Urmi's own holiday spirit which filled the void in this house, making day and night radiant with her liveliness, sending waves of blood pulsing through the work-weary Sasanka. On the other hand, the unmistakable consciousness that she was a source of joy to Sasanka made Urmi happy. For the satisfaction that her mere presence could make another happy had long been denied to her, causing her no little humiliation.

The care and attention to his personal needs to which the master of the house had been so long accustomed, now began to seem to him of but secondary importance. He was pleased with everything now, delighted almost without any cause. He remonstrated with his wife:

"Why do you worry over trifles? An occasional. change of routine does not necessarily mean inconvenience-in fact, it is quite a relief."

Sasanka's mind was now like a river in the interval between ebb and flow. The pressure of work had slowed down. The tempestuous protests that the work would suffer, the loss would be serious, et cetera, which had been so frequent before, were hardly audible now. At any such manifestation Urmi would blow out the solemnity with her laughter. If she found him looking unusually serious, she would inquire: "Has your bogy been here today-that green-turbaned broker, from God knows where-has he been frightening you?"

"How on earth did you know of him?" asked Sasanka in

surprise.

"Oh, I Know him very well. I found him sitting in the verandah that day. You had gone out, so I kept him engaged in conversation. He is from Bikanir; his wife was burnt to death when her mosquito-net caught fire. He is looking for another."

"In that case he will come here daily at the right time just when I am out. As long as he has not discovered a wife, the dream will grow on him."

"Just let me know what you want of him. I believe I can get it out of him."

If nowadays the fat figure of profit in Sasanka's income-ledger came for a while to a standstill in its numerical progress, he was not greatly perturbed. Never before had Sasanka Mazurndar's enthusiasm for listening-in to the evening radio been so pronounced. When Urmi dragged him to it, he did not spurn it as frivolous, nor think the time wasted. He even went to Dum Dum one early morning to watch the aeroplanes take off. Nor was scientific curiosity the main attraction.

He leamt for the first time to go shopping in the New Market. It was Sarmila who used occasionally to visit the Market to buy fish, meat, fruits and vegetables. She looked upon this work as her own special responsibility and never dreamt nor even desired that Sasanka should accompany her on such errands. But Urmi never bought anything, she merely picked up things, handled them, looked them over and haggled with the shopkeeper. If Sasanka attempted to buy anything for her, she snatched away his purse and locked it up in her bag.

Urmi did not in the least share Sasanka's concern for his work. Sometimes when she wasted too much of his time, he lost his temper with her; the result was so disastrous that to retrieve the tragedy he had to sacrifice twice as much time. Between the imminence of tears in Urmi's eyes and the urgent claims of his work he did his best to finish as much of his work as he could in his office before returning home. But even there he found it difficult to stay beyond the afternoon. If sometimes he was detained for any reason, he found awaiting him on return Urmi's stony, impenetrable silence. Sasanka was secretly thrilled at this expression of aggrieved affection in Urmi's eyes misty with suppressed tears.

Very innocently he would plead: "If you have sworn not to talk to me, I must respect your satyagraha, but for heaven's sake, Urmi, don't give up playing-it was not included in your vow." And forthwith he brought the tennis rackets. When about to win the set, he deliberately chose to lose it. Next morning on waking up he would be seized with remorse for having wasted his time the previous day.

In the afternoon of a holiday, as he sat at his desk deeply absorbed in some difficult problem, a red-and-blue pencil in his right hand, the fingers of his left hand needlessly ruffling his hair, Urmi came and announced: "I've fixed it up with that broker of yours- he'll take me to see the Temple of Pareshnath. Come with me-please!"

"No, not today, please," pleaded Sasanka, "it's impossible to get away."

But Urmi was undaunted by the majesty of work.

"How can you," she protested, "without any compunction leave a young, helpless and unprotected girl in the hands of that green-turban? Is that what you call your chivalry?"

In the end, unable to resist, Sasanka left his desk and drove the car.

If Sarmila came to learn of any such outrage, she was greatly annoyed, for she considered it an unforgivable liberty on the part of a woman to intrude on man's field of activity. She had always treated Urmi as a child and thought her so even now; nevertheless, in no case was she, going to let her turn her husband's office into a play-room. She sent for Urmi and talked to her severely. Her words might have borne fruit, if Sasanka, overhearing his wife's angry tone, had not come and stood behind the door, winking encouragingly at Urmi and beckoning to her with a pack of cards to slip away to his office to leam poker from him. It was no time for playing cards, nor had any such idea been in his mind. It was only to spare Urmi the painful humiliation of her sister's bitter scolding which hurt him almost more than it hurt Urmi. He himself might, by pleading, cajoling or mild reproof, restrain.her from interfering with his work, but that Sarmila should take Urmi to task for it was more than he could bear.

Sarmila sent for him and remonstrated. "Why must you indulge her so much-at all hours of the day? Your work is bound to suffer."

"Ah, the poor lonely child," commiserated Sasanka, "if she finds no playmate, how can she live in this lonely house?"

So much for her childish pranks. But it also happened that when Sasanka sat engrossed in some architectural plan, Urmi would pull up a chair by his side and ask him to explain it to her. She was quick of understanding and could steer through mathematical formulae. Sasanka was delighted and would set her problems which she solved. She insisted on accompanying him when he went out on inspection in the steam launch of the jute company. And she not merely accompanied him, but challenged his figures and conclusions, thrilling him with her arguments, which Sasanka found more delightful than any poetry. So that now he was not afraid of bringing some of his office work home. Whether drafting plans or working out problems, she was at his side, listening to his explanation and following his arguments. Though the progress in Sasanka's work was rather slow, it seemed to him that the long hours spent at it were fruitfully employed.

Sarmila was scandalised. While she could appreciate Urmi's childish waywardness and might affectionately tolerate her shortcomings in the management of the household, she could not but strongly disapprove of her unrestrained frequent excursions into her husband's workaday world which she herself had looked upon as absolutely beyond the reach of the feminine mind. Sheer impertinence., it seemed to her-directly contravening the teaching of the Bhagavat Gita which enjoined that one should keep within the limits of one's own nature,

one's *svadharma.*

Unable to restrain herself, she asked Urmi one day: "Can it be that you really enjoy all this tracing and drafting and calculating?"

"I do indeed-greatly, Didi."

"Really!" exclaimed Sarmila skeptically. "Or is it only to please him that you pretend this interest?"

Well, why not? we might ask, since all that Sarmila desired was to make Sasanka happy. But while she would have done it by attending to his personal comforts, this particular way of making him happy did not accord with her conception of happiness. She would repeatedly send for her husband and expostulate:

"Why do you waste so much of your time with her? Your work suffers. She's a child, what will she understand of all this?"

"She understands no less than I do," replied Sasanka, thinking that praise of her sister must please his wife. The simpleton!

In the beginning when in the excitement and pride of his work Sasanka had cooled in his attentions to his wife, Sarmila had not only accepted the fact as inevitable but had actually felt pride in it, and had steadily taught her devoted heart to restrain the ardour of its solicitude, saying, "Man belongs to the race of kings; he must perpetually extend his empire of heroic achievements, otherwise he would be less than woman; for while the natural grace and sweetness of woman, her inborn wealth of love, are sufficient in themselves for the fulfilment of her function in this world, man has to vindicate himself by constant battle and strife. In the old days kings marched out to new conquests, not always out of greed of territory, but to vindicate over again their proud claim to manliness. Far be it from woman to stand in the way of this pride!"

And so Sarmila had not stood in the way; of her own accord she had effaced herself completely from the path to which he had set himself. once she had held him tight in the net of her devoted attachment, but gradually, at no little cost to her happiness, she had loosened the bonds, until she had learnt to serve him from behind the scenes.

And now, alas? she was shocked to see him sink lower day by day. From her sick bed she could not watch everything, but what she could sense was sufficient. Looking into Sasanka's face she could see that he was always in a kind of trance. That this mere slip of a girl should in a few davs have shaken that stern worker out of his arduous shriving-the ignominy was more agonising to Sarmila than the actual pain of her disease.

There was no doubt that the little details of his personal comfort to which Sasanka had been used so long were being neglected; for example, it would be suddenly noticed that his favourite dish was missing at the table. Some sort of excuse would of course be offered. But in the old days no excuse was ever tolerated in this house, no such inadvertence was ever overlooked, but was severely rebuked. What a great revolution indeed that in this very same disciplined household the direst negligence was now looked upon as more amusing than reprehensible? Whom to blame! If Urmi did as her sister desired and sat on her cane stool in the kitchen, supervising the culinary operations-while at the same time carrying on her investigations into the life-history of the cook- suddenly Sasanka would storm into the kitchen with his peremptory, "Come along! Have done with all this!" "Why, what do you want me to do instead?"

"I'm off duty now. Come along, let's go and see the Victoria Memorial. I'll explain to you why it looks so ludicrously pretentious."

Urmi's impressionable mind found it hard to stick to her duties in face of so great a temptation. Sarmila was well aware that her sister's absence would make little material difference to the excellence of the cuisine, nevertheless the solicitude of a feminine touch did impart grace and charm to a man's comfort. But what was the use of worrying when each day it became clearer that comfort hardly mattered to him any longer-he was so happy!

Thus a sort of uneasiness grew upon and possessed Sarmila':, mind. Tossing about in her sick bed she kept on repeating to herself "This much I have learnt before death-whatever else I could do, I could not make him happy. I thought I should see myself in Urmi,but Urnmi is not myself, she has her own individuality.' She looked through the window and thought: 'She cannot replace me, nor could I replace her. My absence would make some difference, but hers would create a void.'

In the midst of these thoughts she suddenly remembered the winter was approaching, and it was time for the warm clothing to be put out to dry in the sun. She sent for Urmi who was playing table-tennis with Sasanka.

"Here's the key, Urmi. Please have all the winter clothes out and spread on the roof in the sun."

Hardly had Urmi turned the key in the lock when Sasanka turned up and said: "There's plenty of time for all that. Come and finish the game first."

"But Didi"

"All right, I'll get you your Didi's permission."

Didi did give her permission-with a deep sigh. Calling the maidservant she asked her to put a cold compress on her head.

Although this spell of sudden freedom after a long confinement had tended to make Urmi forgetful of herself, there were times when she was suddenly reminded of her life's stern mission. She knew that she was not free; she was bound by her own self-imposed vow, bound also by that very vow to another individual, bound to his guardianship, bound to follow the daily routine he had set for her. She could in no way refute his life-long claim over her. It was easy enough to acknowledge this claim when Nirad was there. She seemed to draw strength from him. But now while the heart was estranged, only the conscience was insistent, making the heart still more rebellious. The very difficulty of excusing her transgression made it possible for her

to indulge it. In order, as it were, to drug this uneasiness with opium, she tried constantly to forget herself in fun and frolic with Sasanka, saying: "It'll be all aright in the end. Let me make the most of this little holiday."

Another day she would suddenly shake her head and taking out all her books and papers from the trunk sit and pore over them. Now it was Sasanka's turn to snatch the books from her hands, shove them back into the trunk, and sit tight on the lid.

"How wicked of you, Sasankada!" Urmi protested. "Please don't waste my time."

"I can't waste your time," retorted Sasanka, "without wasting my own as well. So we are quits." . After a little pushing and jostling, Urmi had to give in. It didn't seem that she very, much resented the fact either. Thus thwarted, her conscience, after a brief offensive of four or five days, gradually flagged.

"Please don't imagine I am weak-minded," she warned Sasanka. "What I have resolved upon I shall carry out."

"That is?"

"That is, after getting my degree here, I shall proceed to Europe for medical study."

"And then?"

"And then I shall found and maintain a hospital."

"Whom else will you maintain? That fellow Nirad Mukherjee, that insufferable-"

"Shut up!" cried Urmi, literally shutting his mouth with her palm. "If you talk like this, we'll fall out."

She struggled hard to keep her faith. 'I must be true, true to myself.' She thought that if she failed in the relationship which her father had established between her and Nirad, she would prove herself faithless. Her real trouble was lack of adequate inspiration from the other party. She was like a tree, well rooted in the soil, but bereft of any light of the sun, its leaves turning yellow. Sometimes she found it intolerable and cried out:

"Why can't the fellow write as men write?"

Having received her early school training for many years in a convent, Urmi, whatever the other defects in her education, knew English well. Nirad was aware of it and was therefore all the more keen to dazzle her with his mastery of that language. It would have been better if he had written in Bengali, for the poor fellow did not know how little English he knew. His sentences, packed with long, cumbrous words and phrases culled from books, creaked along like overloaded bullock-carts. Urmi felt like laughing but was too ashamed to do so and would reprove herself:

'It's snobbish to find fault with the English of a Bengali.'

When formerly Nirad used to lecture to her, as he always did, his presence and manner lent weight and dignity to his words, which struck her imagination as even mightier than they sounded. But there is little room for such effects in a long letter. His long-winded pomposities sounded silly and easily betrayed their lack of substance. All that she had grown used to while he was with her now began to jar upon her from a distance. The fellow was utterly devoid of any sense of humour. His letters exposed this want most glaringly and she could not help contrasting him with Sasanka.

What happened one day only emphasised this contrast. As she was rummaging for some clothes in her trunk, she discovered an unfinished knitted slipper at the bottom, which brought back to her the memory of an episode that had happened four years ago. Her brother Hemanta was living then. They had all gone up to Darjeeling. There was no end of fun. Hemanta and Sasanka between them seemed to have released a regular cataract of gaiety. Urmi, who had just learnt knitting from an aunt, had begun a pair of slippers intended as a birthday gift to her brother. It was a subject of constant chaffing by Sasanka. "Whatever else you may give to your brother, please don't give him slippers. That way one insults one's elders, says Lord Manu."

"For whom has Lord Manu prescribed them then?" asked Urmi with a mischievous side-long glance.

"The ancient prescriptive right to be insulted," replied Sasanka gravely, "is the brother-in-law's. Moreover, you owe it to me, interest and all."

"Owe it to you? I don't remember."

"Nor can you. You were a mere child then and hardly of age to play the Puck in your sister's bridal chamber on the auspicious occasion of our wedding. The privilege your tender hands then missed of pulling the ears of this lucky chap now waits to be exercised in fashioning a pair of slippers for him."

The debt was, however, never paid, for that particular pair of slippers found its way to the feet of Urmi's brother.

Soon after, Urmi received a letter from Sasanka which caused her considerable amusement. The letter was still in the box. She opened it and re-read:

"You left yesterday. Before the memory of your visit could fade, a scandal has been associated with your name which it would be wrong of me to conceal from you.

"Many eyes have observed the slippers I Habitually wear. What they have observed even better is the way my toe-nails jut out of the holeslike a wreath of moons breaking out of clouds. (*Vide* Bharatchandra's *Annandamangal.* In case of doubt as to the authenticity of the simile, refer to Didi.) This morning in the office as Brindaban Nandi took the dust of my slippered feet, the dilapidated state of their dignity was exposed. Shocking! I asked my servant Mahesh what had happened to my new pair of slippers. On whose holy usurping feet had it found its refuge? He replied, scratching his head: 'When you went to Darjeeling with Urmi Mashi, the pair went with you. On your return only one slipper came back, the other-'here Mahesh grew red in the face. I also thundered at him to shut up, for there were other persons in the room. Stealing a pair of slippers is a base thing to do, but the human mind is weak and the temptation too great.

Let us hope God forgives. Of course when the theft is ingeniously carried out, it wipes away much of its shame. But to steal one slipper! Fie!

"I have suppressed the name of the thief. But if she allows her own natural sauciness to be provoked by this charge, she will only publicise it the more widely. If her conscience is clear, it may be worth while to create a scene even over one slipper. If now you want to shut the mouth of that vile calumniator Mahesh, you had better have immediate recourse to a pair of hand-embroidered slippers. Fancy the fellow's cheek! Herewith is enclosed the measure of my foot.'

Urmi, delighted with the letter, had immediately set her hands to knitting a pair for Sasanka, but she could not finish it as she soon lost interest in knitting. Today when she discovered this unfinished slipper in her hunk, she resolved to present it, as it was, to Sasanka to mark the anniversary of their journey to Darjeeling, which was only a few weeks ahead. A deep sigh escaped her. Where were those light-winged days under that laughter-lit sky? All that lay in front of her was a prospect of a dreary life of duty, bleak and unrelieved like a desert.

It was the 26th of Falgun, the day of the Holi festival. Busy with his work, Sasanka had no time for this play and the day had been forgotten. Urmi went to where her sister lay in bed and putting the ceremonial mark of the red powder on her feet, *pranaamed* her. Then she went in search of her brother-in-law and found him at his desk immersed in his work. Creeping behind him she smeared his head with the colour, which fell profusely on his file of papers as well. A regular skirmish ensued. The ink-pot being handy on the desk, Sasanka threw the red ink over Urmi's sari, and then catching hold of her hand, he snatched the powder wrapped in an end of her sari and rubbed it over her face. Then began an uproar of chasing and scuffling. Though it was getting late for lunch and Sasanka had not yet had his bath, the house went on ringing with the notes of Urmi's pealing laughter. It was only when Sarmila, concerned for Sasanka's health, began to send message after message that the hilarity came to an end.

The day had long receded, the night was far advanced. Over-topping the flowering branches of the *krishnach*ura tree, the moon rose clear in the unclouded sky. In the sudden gusts of the spring breeze, the green denizens of the garden murmured and swayed, the web of light and shade at the foot of the trees blending in the harmony. Urmi sat by the window, silent and still. Sleep was not in her eyes, for the waves of excitement had not yet quieted down it; her blood. The scent of the flowering mango tree filled her mind with its intoxication. The *madhavi* creeper thrilled with pain in the creative agony of its sap to burst into flower. Urmi's whole being too seemed filled with the same ecstasy. She went into the bathroom and poured water on her head and cooled the burning flesh with a wet towel. Then she lay on her bed, tossing about, until sleep dragged her down into the world of dreams.

At about three in the morning she suddenly woke up. The moon was no longer visible from the window. The room was in darkness; outside, the row of areca palms seemed caught in a network of light and darkness. Urmi broke into a fit of sobbing. Unable to control it, she threw herself on her bed and hid her face into the pillow. It was the wail of the spirit; language cannot lend it either words or meaning. If asked, could she have explained from where came this flood of sorrow that overwhelmed her mind, sweeping away the day's record of duties, the night's repose of sleep?

When she woke in the morning, the sun was already in the room. She had missed her morning duty. Sarmila had excused her absence, attributing it to the strain of fatigue. What was this regret that had overcome and dejected Urmi and filled her with a sense of defeat! She went to her sister and said: "Did!, since I am not of much use to you here, I might as well return home, if you would permit me." Sarmila could no longer protest: "No you can't go-please don't!' She readily agreed. "All right! You may go-since your studies suffer. Come and see us now and again when you have leisure."

Sasanka was out on duty. Taking advantage of his absence, Urmi left for her home that very day. When Sasanka returned from office he brought with him a set of instruments for mechanical drawing he had bought for Urmi, having promised to teach her the technique. Not finding her in her usual place, he came and asked Sarmila: "Where on earth has Urmi disappeared?"

Sarmila replied: "It was not convenient for her studies here, so she's gone home."

"But she had come prepared to put up with this inconvenience for a few days. Why then this objection today, all of a sudden?"

From her husband's tone Sarmila divined that he suspected her as the cause. Without wasting any words on that score, she merely said: "Please bring her back here-tell her I want her to return. I'm sure she won't object.'

Returning home Urmi found awaiting her a long-overdue letter from Nirad. She was afraid to open it, knowing what a pile of guilt she had accumulated. So long she had been citing her sister's illness as tier excuse for indiscipline. The excuse had very nearly lost its validity, ever since Sasanka had insisted on engaging trained nurses for Sarmila both for day and night. In accordance with the doctors' instructions the nurses did not allow die relatives to frequent the patient's room. Urmi knew that her sister's illness would not carry weight with Nirad who would dismiss it with, "That's no excuse." Indeed, it was not, since her attendance was not needed. Full of repentance, she made up her mind to confess her wrongdoing and to beg for Nirad's forgiveness. She would swear never to go astray again, nor take any more liberties with the discipline of her life.

Before opening the letter, she took out again that photograph of Nirad which she had not seen for long, and placed it on her desk. She knew that if Sasanka saw it he would jeer at it. Never mind, she would remain unaffected by his ridicule. That would be her expiation. While in her sister's house, she had hitherto refrained from raising the topic of her impending

marriage with Nirad, nor did any one else there ever allude to it. The engagement had met with no one's approval in that house. Urmi now resolved, with clenched fists, to proclaim the fact in every act of hers. She put on her finger the engagement ring which she had so far kept hidden. It was a very cheap ornament which Nirad, by way of flaunting the pride of his "honest poverty'", had valued far above any diamond. His manner had said:

"The price of the ring is no measure of my value; it's my worth that lends value to the ring."

Having thus made due amends, Urmi very slowly opened the envelope. No sooner had she perused its contents than she gave a leap of joy. She felt like dancing, but not being used to that art, she snatched the sitar:- lying on her bed and, without bothering to tune it, began to draw all sorts of frenzies out of it. just at that moment Sasanka entered the room: :"What on earth is the matter?" he asked. "It seems the date of the wedding is fixed after all!"

"Indeed, Sasankada, it's fixed."

"Fixed beyond any possibility of change?"

"Beyond all possibility of change."

"Let me send for the pipers then and order sweets at Bhimnag's."

"You don't have to bother."

"What! Will you arrange everything yourself?. Bravo Amazon! What about the wedding gifts?"

"The wedding gifts have gone from my own pocket."

"The fish being fried in its own oil, eh? I don't quite understand." "Here, take this letter and read it."

She gave him the letter to read. Having finished it, Sasanka roared with laughter. Nirad had written that having discovered that it was not feasible to carry on in India the highly difficult line of research to which he had dedicated his life, it had become necessary for him to make a supreme sacrifice. He had no alterative but to release himself from his engagement to Urmi. A European lady had agreed to marry him and to devote herself to his work. But of course the mission was the same, whether it was carried on in India or over there. Hence it would be no injustice to the spirit of Rajaram Babu's will if part of the money he had set apart for the mission were to be handed over to him. Indeed such an act would but bring honour to the deceased.

"At any rate, it wouldn't be bad," commented Sasanka, "to help to keep this creature alive in that distant land. If you stop sending him money, there's the danger of the fellow turning up here one day, driven by hunger."

"If you are afraid of that," laughed Urmi, "you had better send him the money yourself. I won't give a penny."

"Sure you won't change your mind any more?" asked Sasanka. "Will the pride of the proud one last"

"If I should change my mind, what's that to you, Sasankada?"

"To answer that question truthfully would only add to your conceit. For your own good therefore I'll keep quiet. But really, I wonder at the fellow's impertinence-what the English call cheek."

A great weight seemed to have been lifted off Urmi's mind-a burden of long standing. She hardly knew what to do with this joy of freedom. She tore up and threw away the programme of study. She flung the ring out of the window to the beggar in the lane who was asking for alms.

"Will any hawker buy these fat books with their pencil annotations?" she asked.

"First let's hear what would happen, if no one bought them."

"The ghost of the dead and buried days may reside in them and may come and stand by my bed at dead of night, pointing its dread finger at me."

"If there be any such fear, I'll buy the books right away, without waiting for any hawker."

"What will you do with them?"

"Perform their last rites according to the Hindu *Shastras*. I would go as far as Gaya to consecrate their ashes, if that would set your mind at rest."

"No, that would be going too far."

"Very well, ''ll build a pyramid in a corner of my library to lodge their mummy."

"But let me tell you, you can't go to your work today."

"Not at all?"

"Not at all."

"What am I to do instead?"

"Let's get into a car and just vanish."

"Go and get your sister's permission."

"I'll tell her after we return-though I'll get a good scolding. But then it won't matter."

"Right! I too am willing to stand your sister's scolding. I'll sweep you along at the rate of forty-five miles an hour, and won't mind bursting a tyre or running over a couple of our own species, even if it takes us as far as the jail-provided you promise thrice that at the end of our chariotdrive you will return to our house."

"Agreed, agreed, agreed!"

After the drive they returned to the Bhowanipore house, but the excitement of forty-five miles an hour still ran hot in their blood and would not subside. This turbulence of blood made them blind to all sense of responsibility, fear or shame.

For some days Sasanka's work fell into a state of complete disorder. He knew that what he was doing was not right and

that the price of neglect might prove to be very heavy. At night he was haunted in bed by fearsome apprehensions in which all ominous possibilities seemed greatly exaggerated. But next day he was once again "heedless of his trust", like the Yaksa of *Meghaduta*.

Alcohol taken once has to be taken again to drown the regret.

Sasanka

THUS time passed. The eyes were frenzied, the mind infatuated. Urmi took long to realize what was happening to her, but one day she was rudely awakened to the reality.

For some unknown reason Urmi was afraid of Mathur-dada and had always avoided him. One day Mathur came to her sister's room in the morning and stayed there till noon. Soon after, Sarmila sent for Urmi and with an expression at once calm and stern said to her: "Do you realize what havoc you have caused by distracting him from his work day after day?"

"Why, what has happened, Didi?" asked Urmi frightened.

" Mathur-dada has just informed me that your brother-in-law has grossly neglected his duties, leaving everything to Jawaharlal who has been helping himself to the building materials with both hands. It has come to light that large godowns have been so badly roofed that the rain pours through them as through a sieve, damaging the goods stored inside Owing to the high reputation of our firm, the clients did not have the construction tested. And now we are faced not only with the loss of our firm's reputation but with considerable financial loss as well. Mathur- is severing the partnership."

Urmi's heart sank, her face grew ashen. In a moment, as by a lightning flash, her heart's hidden secret was revealed to her. She realized now the full measure of intoxication which had unconsciously robbed her other senses, of her power of discrimination. She had looked upon Sasanka's work as a sort of rival who must be thwarted, and from whose clutches she was ever impatient to snatch him away, to have him all to herself. Many a time when Sasanka was bathing, she had thoughtlessly dismissed visitors on business with a curt, "He can't see anybody now,"-only because she was afraid lest Sasanka should again after his bath get engrossed in work and Urmi's day be rendered fruitless for want of his leisure. The terrible picture of her infatuation rose full and clear before her eyes. Instantly she flung herself at her sister's feet and began to repeat in hoarse and broken tones: "Kick me away from your house, drive me away from your presence, now, this very minute!"

The sister had made up her mind on no account to forgive Urmi, but now her heart melted. Gently caressing Urmi's head she said: "Don't worry. Some way out of the difficulty shall be found."

Urmi rose. "Why should you bear all the loss?" she cried. "I too have some means."

"Are you crazy?" broke in Sarmila. "Do you suppose I'm such a pauper as that? I have requested Mathur-dada not to make a fuss over this matter. I'll make up the loss. And now listen, see that your brother-in-law does not come to know that I know anything about it."

Urmi again fell at her sister's feet. "Forgive the, Didi, please forgive me!" she cried, beating her head.

"Who is to forgive whom, sister?" weariedly murmured Sarmila wiping her tears. "Life is so perplexing! We are baffled in our hopes, cheated of our loves."

After this incident Urmi did not leave her sister's side even for a moment, personally attending to every one of her needs, ministering medicine, serving food, helping her bathe, putting her to sleep. Once more she took to her books, poring over them, seated by her sister's bed. She dared not trust herself or Sasanka any more.

The result was that Sasanka took to visiting the sick-room. Only a male can be so clumsy in his infatuation as not to notice that his wife could plainly see through the motive of his frequent visits. Each time he bustled in Urmi blushed hot with shame. He invited Urmi to a football match to see the Mohun Bagan team play; the temptation did not work. He then brought the newspaper where in the advertisement column he had underlined Charlie Chaplin's name, but that also bore no fruit. When Urmi was less remote Sasanka did make an effort to attend to his work, but now even that was impossible.

However painful to her the sight of this unfortunate man, suffering so uselessly, Sarmila at first drew a secret pleasure from it. But she gradually noticed that his suffering was gaining on him, his face drying up, the black marks deepening under his eyes. It was obvious that with Urmi absent from the dining table, he did not relish his food and was slowly starving himself. The recent flood of gaiety that had inundated the house had suddenly ebbed, carrying away with it even the easy and peaceful tenor of their former days.

Once Sasanka had been indifferent to his appearance. He used to have his hair cropped so short as almost to render the set-vice of a comb superfluous. After many vehement attempts at remonstrating, Sarmila had in the end given him up as hopeless. But lately Urmi's brief verdict couched in the form of aloud laugh had not been without effect. For the first tithe in his life Sasanka had begun to apply scented hair-oils to the new growth of hair on his head. But nowadays his heart's wretchedness was so pitifully obvious in the unkempt state of his hair that it was no longer possible to make fun of it, open or secret. Love's tenderness proving stronger than its bitterness, Sarmila was torn with pity for him and contempt at her own callousness; the torment of her illness was intensified.

There was to be military tattoo on the Maidan of the troops stationed at the Fort. Timidly Sasanka inquired: "Will you come, Urmi? I have booked good seats." Before Urmi could reply, Sarmila said: "Of course she'll go. She's dying for a little outing."

Thus encouraged, Sasanka proposed after a couple of days: "Circus?" Urmi seemed only too eager. And then, "Botanical Gardens?" She hesitated, unwilling to leave her sister's side for

so long. But the sister now advocated Sasanka's cause. Drudging with the masons the whole long day, getting messed all over with dust and sand-it was enough to drive one crazy. His health would break down if he didn't go out for a little fresh air. This plea was deemed sufficient to justify a trip as far as Rajganj.

'He cannot afford to lose her, for whose sake he does not mind risking the ruin of his work,' said Sarmila to herself.

Though no one ever told him in so many words, it seemed to Sasanka that what he was doing had the silent approval of all around him. He had convinced himself that Sarmila was in no way unhappy, that on the contrary she felt happy in watching the happiness of this pair. This might have been impossible in the case of an ordinary woman, but then Sarmila was no ordinary woman. During the days of his government service, an artist had made a pencil sketch of his wife, which had till now remained buried in his portfolio. He now took it out and had it expensively framed by a European firm and hung it on the wall in his office, facing his desk. The gardener filled the vase in front with fresh flowers every day.

At last a day came when Sasanka, taking Urmi round the garden to see the sunflowers in bloom, suddenly seized her hand and confessed: "Surely you know that I love you. As for your sister, she is a veritable goddess. I worship her as I could worship none else in this life. She is no creature of this earth, so infinitely superior is she to us."

Her sister had repeatedly confided to Urmi that her greatest consolation was that Urmi would be there to fill her place. Painful, no doubt, it was to imagine another woman in her place; on the other hand, she could not bear the thought of Sasanka dragging on a forlorn, wretched existence, without a woman to look after his comfort. She had also said that if he was thwarted in love, it would react even more ruinously on his business. Once the hunger of his heart was appeased, his work would resume its old order.

Sasanka's mind was in a delirium of exhilaration. He felt transported to a fairyland where all sense of responsibility faded in a stupor of happiness. Nowadays he observed the sanctity of the Sunday as a holiday with the scrupulous adherence of a Christian. One day he came and told Sarmila: "I've secured the steam-launch for the day from the Jute Sahibs. Tomorrow being Sunday, I propose to take Urmi to Diamond Harbour. We'll leave before day-break and return before dusk."

Something seemed to wring the very veins of Sarmila's heart; her forehead was wrinkled with pain. Sasanka noticed nothing.

"What about the food?" she mildly inquired.

"I've ordered it at a hotel."

There was a time when she had looked after such details. Then Sasanka had been indifferent. Now it all seemed changed, topsy-turvy.

"All right. You may go," she said. No sooner had the words left her mouth than Sasanka turned and hurriedly left, without caring to waste a moment. A desire to sob aloud overpowered Sarmila. She hid her face in the pillow and murmured over and over again: 'Why am I lingering?'

The next day, Sunday, was the anniversary of their wedding day, a day whose observance had never suffered a breach so far. This time, too, lying in her bed, she had planned all the arrangements, unknown to her husband. Nothing much. She would have made him put on the red *Banaras dhoti* he had worn at his wedding, herself clad in her wedding sari. She would have put a garland round his neck and made him sit and eat in front of her. Incense burning in the room, the gramophone in the adjoining room playing the familiar wedding music of the sanai-that was all. Every year on this day Sasanka had surprised her with some charming gift. This time too she had felt sure that he had brought something to give her on the morrow.

But everything had turned bitter today. All alone in the room, she kept on murmuring: "False, false, all is false. What's the use of this farce!"

She had no sleep that night. Early in the morning she heard the car drive away from the gate. She broke into sobs. "Thou art but a myth, Lord!" she cried.

From now on Sarmila's condition grew steadily and speedily worse. One day when the disease showed very grave symptoms, she sent for her husband. It was evening, the light in the room. was faint. She motioned to the nurse to leave them alone. She made her husband sit beside her and, taking his hand in hers, said: "I have looked upon you as the Heaven-sent boon of my life. God did not grant me the power to prove worthy of you. I have done the best I could. For my many shortcomings I beg your forgiveness."

Silencing Sasanka, who was about to say something, she continued: "No, don't interrupt me. I leave Urmi to your care. She is my own sister; in her you will find me, and much else besides that you could not find in me. No, please keep still, don't say anything. That I have brought about your happiness before dying is to me the fulfilment of my good fortune."

From outside the nurse called: "The doctor has come."

"Please bring him in," answered Sarmila.

The conversation stopped.

Sarmila's maternal uncle was an enthusiastic patron of all sorts of unorthodox systems of healing. Recently he had become attached to a Sannyasi. When the doctors gave up Sarmila's case as hopeless, he insisted that the prescription of his Himalaya-returned Sannyasi should be given a trial. The medicine consisted of a powder made of a Tibetan root, to be taken with plenty of milk. Sasanka, who could never stand quacks, objected, but Sarmila pleaded: "It'll do no good, of course. But at any rate it'll please Uncle."

But the medicine did bear fruit. Her breathing trouble subsided and she no longer spat blood. Gradually, after a fortnight's treatment she was able to sit up. The doctors explained it by saying that sometimes the imminence of death

provokes so desperate a reaction in the body that the life is saved. However that might be, Sarmila's life was saved.

'How embarrassing!' thought Sarmila. 'What's to be done? Will life saved prove in the end a greater calamity than death?'

Urmi was busy packing. Her term of stay had drawn to its end. Sarmila went up to her.

"You can't leave," she said.

" Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean-is it so rare in our Hindu society for sisters to be cowives?"

"Hush-for shame!"

"Afraid of a scandal? Are people's tongues of greater consequence than the voice of Fate?"

She sent for Sasanka and told him: "Let's migrate to Nepal. You were once offered job at the Royal Court there. You may get it now if you try. No one will malign us there."

Without giving any one time to oppose her suggestion, Sarmila began to make preparations for departure. Morose and downcast, Urmi went about the house as though she would have liked to hide herself. Sasanka said to her: "If you abandon me now, you may well imagine what will happen to me."

"I'm unable to think, to decide for myself," replied Urmi. "Whatever you two decide, I'll accept."

The preparations took some days. When the day of departure drew near, Urmi said: "Please wait a week longer, while I go and consult uncle on a matter of business "

She left.

In her absence Mathur came to Sarmila looking very glum, and said: "You are going away at the right moment. After my last conversation with you, I arrived at a settlement with Sasanka of our mutual business relations, dividing the business without sharing liabilities. Lately Sasanka has been going through the accounts with a view to winding up his own share of the business and it has come to light that not only has all your money been used up but it seems that this house too may have to be sold, to meet the liability."

"Did it never strike him that the crash was so imminent?" asked Sarmila.

"Some crashes," explained Mathur, "like the crash of lightning, are difficult to predict. They strike without a moment's warning. He was aware of his losses and could have repaired them in time, if the silly notion had not possessed him of resorting to quick expedients to restore his losses. Without consulting me he began to speculate in coal. The result was that he was in the end obliged to sell off in a falling market the goods bought when the market was soaring. Now he has suddenly discovered that all he had has blown up like a rocket, leaving behind nothing but ashes. If now by God's grace he gets a job in Nepal, it may still be all right."

Sarmila was not afraid of poverty. On the contrary she knew that in the house of a needy husband her place would be all the more assured, for she was confident that she knew how to soften the rigours of want. Her ornaments would go a long way to keep off the starkness of poverty for some time. Urmi's portion too would be at the disposal of her husband if he married her-a faint suggestion of this thought did peep into her mind. But merely to exist is not enough. The fortune which her husband had built up so long by his own prowess, for whose sake she had, day after day, voluntarily suppressed many a claim of her heart, this embodiment of the joint dream of their lives now vanished like a miragethe humiliation of it made her crumble into dust. She wished that death had spared her this dishonour.

'I have resigned myself to my fate,' she said to herself, 'but will he reconcile himself to the inexorable emptiness of poverty and dishonour? Will it not plant the bitterness of regret in his heart? He may find it hard one day to forgive her whose infatuation brought this all about; the very food served by her will taste like poison in his mouth. Chocked with shame by the stench of his own sottishness, he will only find fault with the alcohol. And if in the end he is driven to dependence on Urmi's income, the bitterness of his humiliation will turn every moment of her life into a hell.'

In the process of clearing his accounts with Mathur, Sasanka suddenly discovered that every penny of Sarmila's had been lost in his business, and that, without telling him anything about it, she had paid up the debt to Mathur. He recalled how, when he had resigned his Government post, he had built up his business with her money. Now again, leaving the ruin of his business behind, he was entering the harness of service, with the load of that same debt to Sarmila on his back. How would he ever repay the debt with the meagre income of a salaried post[7]

In about ten days' time they would be leaving for Nepal. That night he had not a wink of sleep. Before the day broke, he flung himself out of bed and bringing his fist down on the dressing table with all his might, cried out: "I will not go to Nepal." He swore: "Here in Calcutta we will stay on, the two of us along with Urmi-facing the full malicious glare of frowning, scowling society. And here in this very Calcutta I will build up once again the ruined edifice of my business."

Sarmila was busy making a list of articles to be taken on the journey or to be left behind. Suddenly she heard her name called out, and ran to her husband, throwing the list down. Apprehensive of some sudden calamity she asked with a trembling heart, "Why, what's the matter?"

"I will not go to Nepal," came the reply. "I will defy society and stick it out here."

"Why, what has happened?" she inquired.

"Work," he replied.

Work! The same old word! Her heart began to beat fast.

"Don't think I am a coward, Sarmi. Could you imagine me

so degraded as to run away from my responsibility?"

Drawing closer, Sarmila took his hand in hers.

"Do make your meaning clear," she said.

"Don't conceal the fact from me," cried Sasanka, "that I am once again in your debt." "All right, I won't," submitted Sarmila. "From this very day," went on Sasanka, "I'll begin discharging the debt-as I did once before. Mark my words. I'll recover and drag up again what I have flung away into the abyss. Trust me again as you once gave me your trust."

Sarmila's head sank on her husband's breast. "Let me also have your full trust," she murmured.

"Teach me, train me, mould me so that I may become worthy of sharing your task."

From outside came the cry: "Letter!" Two letters came in, written in Urmi's hand. One of them was addressed to Sasanka:

"I am on my way to Bombay en route for Europe. I shall carry out father's wishes and return a doctor in about six or seven years' time. In the meantime the havoc I have caused in your home will have had time to repair itself. Don't worry about me. I can't help worrying about you."

The other letter was for Sarmila.

"Didi, a thousand *pranaams* at your feet. Forgive me the wrong I have done you unwittingly. If no wrong has been done-then that very knowledge will make me happy. I dare not hope for any greater happiness, nor indeed do I know for certain wherein lies happiness. If happiness is not in store for me, let it be so. Let me only not err."

Glossary

Annapurna : A name of the goddess Durga, conceived in the act of giving food to Shiva, her consort,and to the whole world. Sasankamauli is also one of the names of Shiva.

Da : Short for *Dada,* a term applied to elder brothers, elder cousins as well as (as in this case) to elder brother-in-law.

Debottar : Property endowed for religious purposes; *Shebait,* its trustee.

Di : Short for Didi, a term applied to elder sisters and elder cousins.

Gaya : The holy city in Bihar where the Hindus go to perform the last rites of the dead.

Kaka : Father's younger brother or cousin.

Kalpahar : A Bengali Brahmin who renounced his religion and became a general under Muslim rulers and earned great notoriety as an iconoclast (16th century).

Khuki : A pet name for girls in Bengal.

Luchi-sthan : An untranslatable word. *Luchi is* a kind of fried pancake much favoured by Bengalis; *sthan* means place; *luchisthan* meaninga place which provides good foodor material well-being.
Beluchisthan (be meaning without), used as an antonym of luchisthan, is a pun on the word Baluchistan, the arid, rocky region to the northwest of India.

Makar : Fabulous marine animal described in Indian mythology as the mount of the goddess Ganga (Ganges); hence auspicious. The mouth of this animal appears as a decorative motif in Indian ornaments.

Mashi : Mother's sister. In Bengal servants usually address the mistress as Mother. The mistress's sister is hence referred to as Mashi.

Meghaduta : The Cloud-Messenger, the famous poem by Kalidasa.

Meghnadbadh Kavya : An epic in blank verse by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, the great predecessor of Tagore.

Pakhwaj : A kind of double drum.

Pranaam : The Hindu way of saluting one's elders is to touch their feet with one's hand and then to lift the hand to one's forehead:

Punjabi : A kind of upper garment worn by men; *Dhoti* is a lower garment.

Vidyut-lata : Lit. Lightning-creeper. Nirad literally means a cloud.

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